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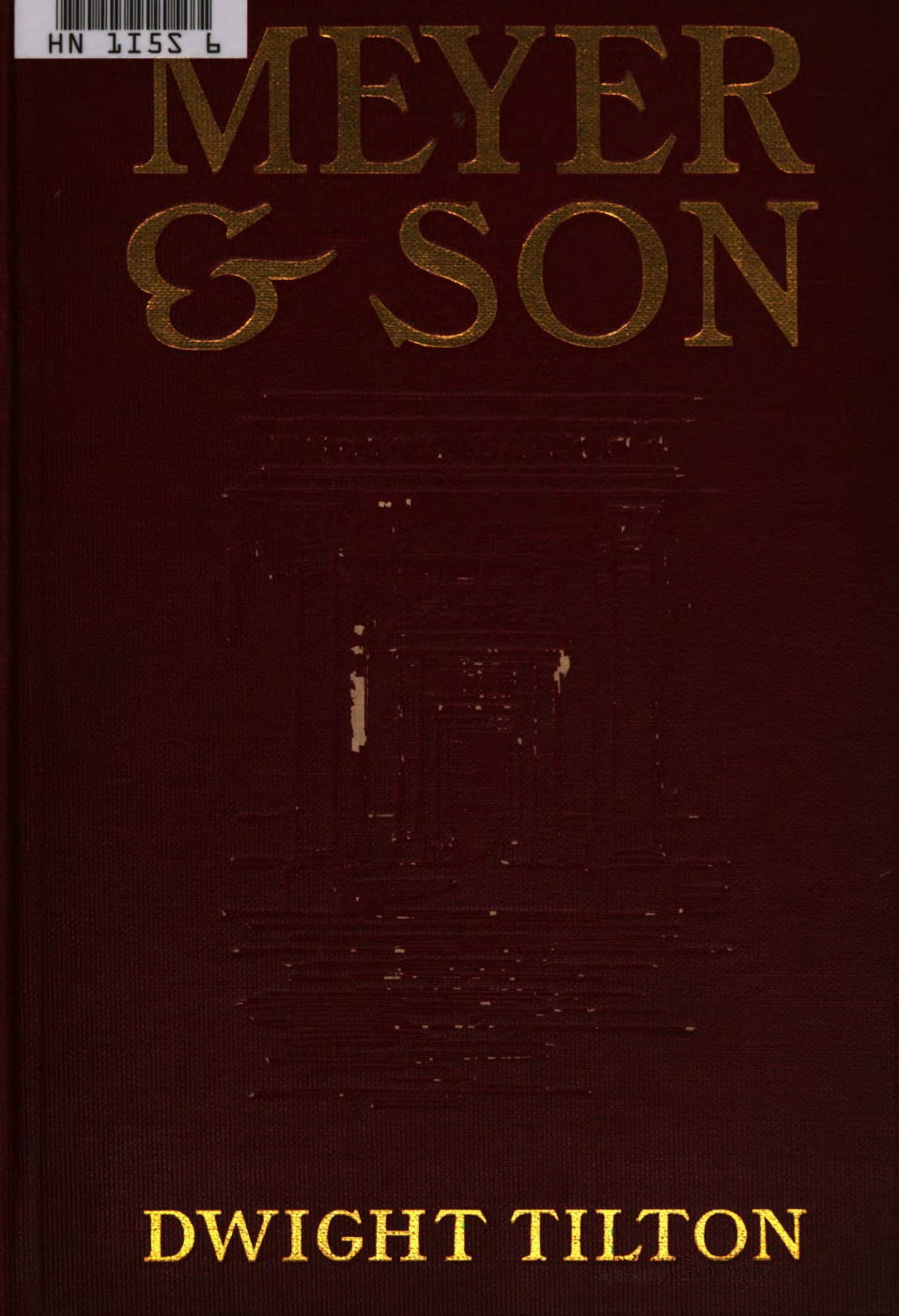

DWIGHT TILTON

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Doris

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MEYER & SON

A NOVEL

BY DWIGHT TILTON

Author of

"Overcoats," "The Second Mrs. ——," "Big Dave Lockhart," "The Golden Grindstone," etc.

Based upon the newspaper play of the same name by Thomas A. Wilson

THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING COMPANY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
1909

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MEYER & SON

A NOVEL

By DWIGHT TILTON

Author of

"Miss Petticoats," "On Satan's Mount,"
"My Lady Laughter,"
"The Golden Grayhound," etc.

Based upon the three-act play of the same name by Thomas Addison

THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING COMPANY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
1909

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"Mr. Strauss," he commanded. "Send this to Abrams with a letter that the note has been paid" 121

"No, I want Max, thank you," she insisted 138

"Father, are you mad?" she cried . . 158

"Go into the house, girl; go, I say" . . 215

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"In that case, Mr. Meyer," she said, "it is good-bye" 309

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MEYER & SON

I

THE HOUSE of Natäan Meyer, banker, roused itself to the business of the day with a calm deliberateness somewhat akin to the rising of the sun. No feverish activities attended the opening of its rich and handsome offices; no bustling of many men came with the morning. Little hint was there of the tense and feverish operations that often marked the later hours. Jacob Strauss saw to it that the beginning, at least, of each round with fortune be conservative, wary. Jacob himself might have his moments of nervous excitement as noon waxed and waned, but never before " hours."

Jacob had opened the office of Nathan Meyer during all the long term of his position as retainer of the house. The days when he began to perform the service in which he gloried were prehistoric, mediæval to the

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minds of the younger clerks. So, too, there was mystery as to that period in the morning when he stole down the deserted streets and applied the big key, from which he never parted, to the outside door of the banking house.

No one ever knew just how early was Jacob Strauss' advent. Once a wag of the younger branch of the service declared his belief that Jacob slept in some unknown corner of the apartments, but he had been crushed by the old man, who bitterly resented even the implication of such an indignity to the firm.

Jacob came with quiet tread into the private office of Nathan Meyer this morning and with more than his customary keen search of vision. From under his shaggy eyebrows his bright eyes glanced seemingly at every object in the room. They used to say that Jacob took a mental inventory of every separate thing, great or small, in the private office of his beloved chief. He would know if a single book were out of place;

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even if a block of paper had been removed from the great, wide mahogany desk of Nathan Meyer. His retentive mind was a veritable catalogue of everything needed for the transaction of the business.

Jacob closed the heavy door with its upper glass partition softly behind him as he came into his holy of holies, his ark of what was to him next to his religion. Noiselessly he opened his own roll-top desk and then flirted a large red handkerchief over the beautiful surface of Nathan Meyer's table, to make sure that the work of the night cleaners was made absolutely without flaw.

Carefully he removed his long black coat and then as carefully he took from one of its inner pockets a little package which soon swelled into larger dimensions as it was released from its confinement, and then to still larger as he removed the sheltering paper from what proved to be a nosegay of bright blossoms.

Rummaging in one of the pigeon-holes of his own desk he brought out, with almost

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trembling fingers, a little vase of curious dull blue ware. Stepping aside as noiselessly as he had come in, he returned in a moment with water. Then, almost reverentially, he placed the bright yellow blossoms in their shelter and put them on the top of another desk still closed. Then he stepped back for a moment and gazed as if fascinated with the result of his labor of love.

A beam from the early sun touched one of the eastern windows of the office and threw upon the floor the shadowed letters, "Nathan Meyer, Banker." Something in their cheerful glow warmed the old man's heart.

"Nathan Meyer," he said to himself. "Nathan Meyer. Ah, the great name and the great house go on, on. In a few days the world shall know it as Meyer & Son—Meyer & *Son*. Surely the God of Israel is good to us."

He ran his hands caressingly over his long white beard, as if in it lay some of the virtue that had made Nathan Meyer a power in the town.

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"Meyer & Son," he whispered again. 'Who knows but "—the old Hebrew paused in his meditation, for his keen eye caught the slow opening of one of the doors in the rear of the office. Presently the aperture became wider and a dapper young fellow of that self-evident, clerky type, seeing only Jacob, bolted in.

"Aha, Mr. Strauss," said the new-comer, noting the bouquet surmounting the closed desk. "When did you acquire the nosegay habit? Is there a new stenographer coming for the inner sanctum?" He accompanied this jocosity with a wink intended to be very knowing.

The old Jew patiently shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing. He had long since learned that a battle of repartee with this effervescent Gentile was not worth the waste of words it demanded.

The young man walked to the desk and examined it critically.

"By the way, my aged friend, whose desk is this, anyway?" he demanded. "I haven't

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seen it opened since it came here a year or more ago."

Jacob Strauss hesitated a moment, as if to divulge some important piece of information. Then he shook his head and answered shortly: "For the new partner in our house."

"*Our* house, indeed," muttered the other under his breath. "You'd think he was the house itself and all its fixtures, instead of being a little better clerk than the rest of us. New partner, eh?" he said aloud. "Who is he? Oh, secret, eh, and you won't tell it to your old college chum?"

A thoughtful expression crept over the young fellow's face. Suddenly he slapped his thigh with his hand. "I've got it," he shouted. "It's Max who's to be the new partner. Oh, you needn't wave the gray whiskers. You'd never fling floral testimonials at any other partner. It's Max for a ton of ducats. Max! Your adored Max! Now, isn't it, friend of my youth?"

The old man turned on his heel and went to his own desk, where he sat down and

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made a great pretence of pulling open and shutting its various drawers. The clerk followed him up relentlessly.

"A great partner *he'll* make. Oh, you needn't frown, Jacob. He's a bully chap and all that sort of thing and I like him, but a business man—well, not on your pastel portrait. He'd be writing sonnets in the check books and trying to twist a new metre out of the adding machine."

These fresh taunts effectually aroused Jacob from his silence.

"Max Meyer is a young man of great parts and of great promise, Mr. Armstrong," he said sternly. "It is not for you, with your flippant tongue, to say what sort of a financier he will become. He has the ability to do what he will. I know he will ere long be the mainstay of our house."

Armstrong laughed in easy, unconvinced fashion.

"Oh, he's a fine fellow all right, Jake, but you take it from me that he hasn't been studying double entry and discount in Gay

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Paree. I've heard something about that little village myself. Er—when's he coming back to the coop? "

" Mr. Max sails from Havre on the twelfth."

" And I presume you'll keep on robbing the hothouse till then."

The sound of an outer door closing with the unmistakable hand of a man entering his own was heard in the distance.

" The boss," whispered the young man. " Me for the limekiln."

As he vanished by a side door Jacob looked after him with an expression of deep pity in his keen gray eyes.

" How can these youthful Gentiles make so light of business? " he asked himself.

A moment more and Nathan Meyer was seated at his own broad table. There was strength in his well-knit, well-filled figure, keenness in his black eyes and a certain dignity in his close-cropped gray beard. His features were unmistakably Hebraic, and he betrayed his German origin sometimes by a strong accent. These were at

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moments of great excitement or of anger. Otherwise, in the incisive swiftness of his speech, he would have passed for an American by birth as he was by training.

Jacob Strauss, who had arisen from his seat as his chief entered, now approached deferentially to the other side of the mahogany table, rubbing his hands as if in pleasant anticipation of the orders for the day. For a little Nathan Meyer said nothing to him, nor looked at him, but passed a keen glance about the familiar walls of the room as if to penetrate through their means some outside secret of the financial world.

"Who was that left the office as I entered?" he asked sharply.

"Young Armstrong."

"Oh." There was a touch of disappointment in the word. "Good morning, Jacob."

"Good morning, sir. Shall I take your coat?"

After a moment's busying himself with the garment, Strauss said hesitatingly: "You —you thought it might be *he*, Mr. Meyer?"

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The younger man flashed a look that was almost indignant into the keen face of his old servant.

"How often have I told you it was 'Nathan' and 'Jacob' between you and me?" he said.

The other almost smiled deprecatingly. "Very well, sir—Nathan—if so it is to be. But," he added in sudden alarm, "not when any one is here, Mr. Meyer."

Nathan laughed aloud, shrugged his shoulders and patted the old man good-naturedly on the arm. Then his face grew grave again.

"You thought I was thinking the boy might be here, weren't you, Jacob? Well," he said with a sigh, "I was. Thought he perhaps had changed his mind and taken an earlier steamer to surprise us."

He glanced keenly at the little golden bunch of blossoms on the unused desk. Then, as if seized by some sudden shame of his own weakness, he hastily picked up his bundle of letters. Out from the packet fell a huge card emblazoned upon which was a

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name that might have been read across the room. Nathan held the pasteboard far from his eyes as if dazzled at the sight.

"Mulvey has called since I have been away?" he said with a question in his voice.

"Every day last week, sir."

"H'm, I've had him doing a little work for me, feeling out the sentiment among the city council on our telephone franchise. Not that there is much doubt as to how the cat will jump," he added with a half sneer. Then, as his eye caught the picture of an architect's drawing of an imposing structure hanging in a handsome frame over the massive safe, its graceful lines seemed to suggest the banker's next question.

"You haven't sent that check to the Jewish Hospital, have you, Jacob?"

"Not yet," said the other, as if some deep crime had been committed. "I—"

"Make it $2500 instead of $2000. What's been done about that Edgerton mortgage?"

The keen light of an aroused emotion came into the older man's eyes.

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" They can't pay," he replied, " and— "

Meyer's jaws snapped as if entrapping an enemy therein.

" Foreclose it at once," he said. " And that Jenkins matter—tell Einstein to bring suit at once." He picked up a dirty slip of paper from his desk and studied its crude figures critically.

" What does this mean? " he asked harshly, " ' Shoe shines, 50 cents.' "

Jacob Strauss took the offending bit of paper and held it close to his spectacled eyes.

" Why, Nathan," he replied placidly enough, " Charley says— "

" He's a damned little swindler," shouted the banker, making a vicious half whirl in his chair. " I owe him only forty cents. Pay him and tell him to keep out of here." And thus settling the fate of the offending boot-black, he wheeled about to his work again.

After the cutting open of a few more letters Meyer again took cognizance of his ancient retainer.

" Jake."

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"Sir?"

"Send a check for $200 to the Fresh Air Fund, and—"

"Well?" suggested Strauss, as his chief hesitated.

"Tell Cranley we won't renew his note. He's got to settle or we'll sell him out. We've had enough of his nonsense."

Again the preposterous visiting card glared at the banker from its place on his blotter. It was impossible to escape its hint.

"You say Mulvey called several times?" asked Nathan.

"Every day last week, as I told you."

"Ha! Anything up?" was the sharp interrogation.

"He says," said the old clerk slowly and impressively, "that if the bill goes through granting a franchise it will be vetoed by Mayor Jones."

His chief picked up a huge gold pen and, with many a scratch and splutter, wrote something upon a small slip of paper.

"Impossible," he said, carefully drying his

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pen in the little box of sand that had been a Meyer tradition for forty years. "Impossible. It is a public necessity that the people demand every time they pick up a telephone receiver." He gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling for a moment, then said, as if thinking aloud:

"Besides, Jones can be reached."

"That's the trouble, sir, that's the trouble," returned Strauss, his voice shaking with emotion. "He *has* been reached, Mulvey says."

"Reached," snapped Meyer. "Reached by whom?"

"Mulvey says by the man who made him mayor."

The banker emitted a long, hissing whistle that descended nearly an octave in its flight.

"You don't mean—you can't mean—"

"Russell Gray," replied old Strauss, solemnly.

"Oh, impossible," cried Meyer petulantly. "Mulvey must have got his facts twisted. Why, Jacob, Major Gray has been my friend for twenty years."

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" So I told Mulvey."

" What was his reply?"

" He said: ' Well, their wires are crossed this time at any rate.' I did not know for certainty the inner meaning of that Gentile phrase, but I am sure it signified harm."

The banker lifted and replaced many times the square cover on his immense cut-glass ink-stand, as if each sharp click of the descending top spoke enlightenment to him.

" Russell Gray controls Jones," he said at length, and more calmly. " There can be no doubt of that. If he is fighting against the franchise of the Home Telephone Company, he is fighting me, for the measure is one approved by every citizen who uses the telephone. If what Mulvey says is true, we must smash Gray."

Having said this with the judicial placidity of a man on the bench sentencing some unworthy offender, Nathan Meyer turned to his letters again. A look of already anticipated victory illumined the face of his aged confidant and he turned away, rubbing his hands

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and smiling as if at some beatific vision.

"Send Miss Phelps to me with her book, please," called his chief as he passed to the door of the outer office.

"Yes, Mr. Mey—Nathan," returned the old man.

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II

THE WIDE veranda of the Gray mansion was a pleasant place whereon to "loaf and invite one's soul," even in the autumn, when far down the meadow and beyond the little lake which it overlooked the maples were beginning to put on their scarlet fashions. On its wide expanse were soft rugs, potted plants and wicker chairs stuffed with pillows. A great French window opened upon it from the drawing-room within.

Here, at midday, were seated two persons, one a small, slight, dark-faced girl with a piquant, elfin face, the other a woman of middle age who sat calmly with fingers busy upon some bit of embroidery. Tall hedges shut off the gaze of passers-by in the fine old street on which the house was situated, and there the feminine folk of the Gray family were accustomed to spend most of their out-of-doors,

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The young girl was tucked deep down in a great willow chair, her back propped with an array of gaily colored cushions. She was reading from a small volume, whose binding of white and gold suggested the dainty thought of some airy philosopher.

As her dark eyes were bent upon the page, one would have agreed to a certain prettiness in her countenance and yet the face was too small to be absolutely beautiful. She frowned a little as she turned the pages of her book. She sighed at last and then, with a little scornful laugh, hurled the volume from her, narrowly escaping the destruction of a beautiful orchid hanging from the railing.

" Such rot," she said petulantly.

" What is it, Janie?" asked the elder woman anxiously.

The girl pursed up her pretty mouth into an expression of intense scorn.

" Why, Ellen," she said, " I'm laughing at the ponderous lies that find their way into print."

The other stooped and picked up the little

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book and looked at it smilingly. "A big lie in a little book? And it isn't heavy, either."

The girl stretched her hand forth impetuously.

"Give it to me and let me read it to you," she said, in her clear, high-pitched, but musical, voice.

"Now, then, 'If the spirit be lovely, what matter the infirmities of the body? It is not the casket but the jewel within the casket that compels our admiration.' Bosh!"

Again she threw the book viciously from her and it sailed far over the railing and landed in the withering grass below. Her companion looked at her with real solicitude this time. Her attitude toward the young woman was that of a well-poised mind toward a spoiled and fretful child.

"What ails you, girlie?" she asked gently.

"What doesn't ail me," replied the little girl. "I haven't a 'lovely spirit' and if I had—" she struck her chest significantly, "do you suppose this casket wouldn't matter?"

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" Janie, don't, dear," said the woman, with distress in her voice. " You're beautiful in my sight." There was a fatal bit of emphasis on the " my," and it spoke volumes to the sad-faced little figure in the big chair. She replied pettishly :

" Oh, you are used to me, Ellen, but do you imagine any man would look at me twice—with my twisted back and old-young face?"

" Jane ! " murmured the other with as near a feeling of reproof as she ever allowed herself to this much loved girl.

" Oh, he *might* do it," went on Jane, unconvinced, " to pity me, but I don't want pity Max pities me and sometimes I could hate him for it."

" Max, Max," echoed the older woman under her breath. She looked at the elfin face as if attempting to read there something of the significance of the word, but she said nothing aloud.

" I am twenty," pursued the little girl. I have a woman's heart, Ellen,—and—oh,

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why couldn't I have been like Doris! I'm only poor little Jane, to be pitied and petted as you would a sick kitten." She buried her face in her hands and her small mis-shaped frame shook with unsuppressed sobs.

Ellen Carter arose and threw her arms tenderly around the weeping Jane.

"My darling child," she crooned. "Don't. I love you,—old Ellen who thinks you sweeter and better and, yes, *prettier* than any girl who ever lived. Dear God, comfort her," she added aside. "There, my pet, my precious, look up. No man is good enough for you."

Then there came a sudden, swift transition from mood to mood that was typical of this unfortunate little daughter of the house of Gray. The sobs merged into a laugh and when she looked up her face was wreathed with a mischievous smile. She had the true saving grace of humor and that it did indeed save her from many and many a bitter day was part of the compensation given to her.

"Well, I'd be *bad* enough for any man,

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if that would help matters," she cried. "You dear old goose, forget what I have said."

The other raised her finger warningly.

"Hush, dear, I hear Doris."

As Doris Gray came from the window behind her sister's chair and stood over the little figure in all the opulence of beautiful young womanhood, Ellen Carter marked at that instant the contrast that had existed between the girls during all their lives. Tall and blonde, with a perfect poise and a face absolutely serene in its classic lines, she exemplified everything that her sister lacked. She was a year older, and yet should their two faces be judged, she would appear to have been earlier born.

Just at this moment a shade of annoyance was over her fair face. Something had evidently displeased this goddess of the Grays.

"I never so much wish I had been born a man as when I use the 'phone. A man can say things, you know," she said with a

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smile, looking at Ellen Carter over the dark curly head of her little sister.

Jane looked up at her adoringly. "What is it now, Doris?" she asked. "What offence has the world given my handsome sister?"

"Oh, I've been twenty minutes trying to talk to Kitty Bingham," said Doris, "and all I can get is 'Line is busy' or choice nothings of other folks' Choctaw over crossed wires."

Even the sedate Ellen Carter thought that she, too, had had her grievances against the existing telephone company.

"The service is rather—well, what shall I say?" she ventured.

"If you preferred truth to conversational style," suggested Jane sharply, "you might say 'rotten.'"

"Jane, dear," said Doris blandly. "Why, Jane!"

"Well, that's what I heard papa call it not a month ago," said Jane defiantly.

"Yet now he's talking just as hard against the new telephone company as he used to

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talk against the old one," ventured Ellen.

Little she knew of the merits of the great controversy just then agitating the town. But she was keen of observation and strong of memory and it was her great delight to revive and bring up for the confusion of the head of the house of Gray remarks that time and its various changes might render inconsistent.

Apparently, Jane was more intimately acquainted with the true inwardness of this particular subject.

" Well, you see," she said dryly, " when he used to pay his respects to the bad service he had no fear of loss of dividends. Now that there's a rival on the horizon the tune is different."

" Oh, well," said Doris, quickly wearying of the argument, " I suppose I shouldn't complain. Central gave me one number out of three."

She paused and gazed out over the smiling meadows to where the blue waters of the little pond were charmingly placed in their

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setting of crimson and yellow foliage. After a moment she added: "Max Meyer will be home Friday."

Little Jane started nervously at the sound of the name, familiar though it had been in the household for many years. She controlled herself in a moment and yet Ellen Carter noted the subtle revelation of emotion with a look of pain. Silence hung about all three for an instant. Then said Jane dryly:

"What number was it you said you *did* get, Doris?"

Doris would have replied to this rather pointed quip in kind, but that the sudden appearance of a tall, athletic young fellow from out the French window somehow stilled the words on her tongue. It was her twin brother, Paul, a startling replica of herself in masculinity. He had her features roughened into the shape of a man; her handsome blue eyes, but without their frankness; her light waving hair, cropped close.

It scarcely needed the evidence of the little fraternity pin fastened upon the lapel of his

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white flannel coat to show that he was a college man. He was fair to look upon, surely, and yet Ellen Carter's discerning eye noted that there had gone from his face that old-time expression of sincerity. He looked about him for a moment, removed his cigarette from his lips and observed, with a smile that was meant to be intensely cynical:

"Pardon me, girls, but I was compelled to hear your little talk-fest about our friend Max Meyer. So he's coming back, is he? The governor will be tickled to death when he hears that—tickled to death."

Little Jane flared up in an instant at the implied sneer.

"Paul Gray, what in the world is the matter with you?" she snapped. "You are always flinging out some slur at Max lately. Columbia doesn't seem to have mended your manners."

The young fellow blew out a ring of smoke meditatively and then blew another smaller one through it.

"It's high time," he observed, "that

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this family cut the Jews from their calling list."

Doris turned toward him sharply.

"Paul Gray, I'm ashamed of you," she cried. "I won't hear any more of such stuff," and she turned on her heel and swept into the house with the true air of an offended goddess.

The brother whistled softly a bar or two from the latest musical comedy craze.

"So, ho," he said to himself significantly, and then to Jane: "Sis is doing the grand dame act, isn't she? That's all right from her standpoint, but the governor'll put the kibosh on all howdy-doing with the Meyer family, or I'm a Dutchman."

And now it was Ellen Carter's moment to show displeasure. And she did it in her mild but usually logical fashion.

"So," she said to the young man, "because Nathan Meyer does not consult your father before he interests himself in this citizens' movement for decent telephone service, he is going to break up a friendship that began

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in childhood. Is that what you mean?"

"Kids' nonsense," muttered Paul.

Little Jane rose from her chair and stretched herself to her full height, which was not very much. At any rate, she raised her indignant eyes to her tall brother's face, not at all abashed by his physical superiority.

"Was it 'kids' nonsense,'" she asked, "when he got you out of that scrape at Columbia?"

"Hush up," whispered the boy, looking into the house as if afraid that his twin sister might still be within earshot.

"No, I won't hush up," retorted Jane. "But for him you'd never have gone to college. You know father didn't mean to send you."

"I wish he never had," mumbled the youth, pitching his cigarette over the balcony rail, as Ellen Carter, with disgust written over her placid face, gathered up her work and disappeared.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Jane relentlessly.

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The boy flushed and shifted his position uneasily.

" I mean," he said, " if I had never gone to Columbia I wouldn't have been thrown into so much intimacy with that cad of a Jew."

" He isn't a cad," flamed up the little girl. " He's a gentleman. That's what you are not, Paul Gray, when you talk as you are talking now. And he took higher honors at Columbia than *you'll* ever take," she added viciously.

The young man twisted his face into an expression of supreme contempt.

" Oh, don't keep reminding me that we both claim the same college," he cried. " It's nauseating and I'd like to forget it. I hate Jews and so does the governor."

" Yet he and Nathan Meyer used to be warm friends and were in many business deals. I've heard father say he was a great help to him years ago."

" Help," snorted Paul. " When he helped him he was helping himself. Trust a Jew for that. In the old days there weren't

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so many of them. Now Meyer and his gang think they own this burgh."

Little Jane laughed, but there was not much merriment in the high, clear tone of her voice.

"Oh, it's that, is it?" she queried. "Papa finds they are too smart for him."

The boy started to reply, then switched off down the garden toward the lake. His sister Jane looked after him for a moment with a puzzled expression in her dark eyes. Then she heaved a little sigh and picked up again the white and gold book that had so offended her sense of justice a few minutes before, but which had been rescued from its grassy oblivion by Ellen Carter.

The result of her previous anger had been to wrench the volume and it opened again at the selfsame page. Again she read, but this time without the spoken words: "It is not the casket but the jewel within the casket that compels our admiration."

"Does any man really believe that?" she asked herself aloud. "Oh, pshaw!"

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III

LARISSA McBRIDE toiled up the third flight of the ramshackle old Realty Building with some perturbation of spirit and much shortness of breath. The latter was induced by her thirty-five years, to which time had given an attractive rotundity; the former, by the uncertainty that preyed upon her mind as to the outcome of the special errand which she meant to be of use to her paper, *The Morning Banner*, as well as profit to herself.

Clarissa was a brown-haired, round-faced woman whose rather unusual blue eyes had the habit of peering around the corner of an individual's face, as it were, in the effort to see what was behind his brain. For years she had been the society "editress" of *The Banner* and had made for herself a very enviable reputation as a purveyor of well-spiced fact for the inhabitants of the city.

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It was her chief delight, however, to go outside the editorial restrictions of her particular field and to "dig up," as she called it, various sensational stories, all of which brought her fame and materially influenced the size of her envelope on Saturdays.

So Clarissa was now engaged in the somewhat arduous task of reaching the top of the Realty Building, with a fixed and definite purpose in view. Arriving at the head of the stairs, she peered around in the dimly-lighted hall until there, in almost illegible characters, she read the name, "Peter Mulvey, Real Estate." Waiting to compose herself and bring her pumping heart back to its normal rate, she noted that Mr. Mulvey's sign was on the dingiest door of all that collection of dingy entrances.

She had long known Mr. Mulvey as a frank and hearty exponent of practical politics, but she had never before seen his—yes, coop, she declared to herself—in the top of the Realty Building. She remembered that Mulvey was not at all like his quarters, for he

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was fresh and florid and well scrubbed. Perhaps that was why she rested a moment before opening the Honorable Peter's door.

" H'mph," she muttered to herself. " They say he does dirty work in politics. Must be the effect of this building." Then she read once more the dim legend on Mr. Mulvey's door. " Real Estate, eh? Plenty of it on that glass."

At last, feeling everything to her satisfaction in her personal appearance, Mrs. McBride knocked smartly.

" Come in," roared a big voice, and Clarissa obeyed.

If the voice had been big, so was the man—ponderously big, and he sat in a big swivel cane-seated chair at a desk, his feet elevated and his enormous head covered with a slouch hat, almost totally enveloped in the copious smoke from a big cigar. Everything about the Honorable Peter was big, even to the diamonds on the shirt front and on his finger.

It was strange, Clarissa thought, that

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this man of size in himself and in his appurtenances, should affect so small a room.

Mr. Mulvey had apparently not heard Clarissa's entrance, for he remained buried in the columns of the paper he was reading. Clarissa peeped over his shoulder. The very page that so seemed to attract the thought of the Honorable Peter was that containing the news and gossip of the social world.

" My column !" she exclaimed involuntarily.

At that, Mulvey, as if startled out of his chair by an explosion, jumped up and rushed for the frock coat which hung on a peg in one corner of the room.

" Oh, not—not on my account," said Clarissa coquettishly. " Not at all. Remain as you are, Mr. Mulvey. The afternoon is warm."

But the big politician insisted upon the deference due a lady. He plunged himself into his frock coat; threw to the floor a mass of papers from the one other chair in the room and wiped its seat with the skirt of his garment.

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"Ye see, I didn't expect no lady callers," he shouted amiably— "much less the society 'editoress' of *The Banner*."

Clarissa smiled sweetly.

"You don't have many chairs for your visitors," she observed.

"No, they don't stay long," said Mr. Mulvey. "They git theirs quick and then fade away."

"Do you suit them as quickly as that?" asked Clarissa.

"Suit them, is it?" laughed Mr. Mulvey. "Well, if they don't like it they kin lump it."

Mrs. McBride was still leading up to the grand subject of her visit with what she considered skilful approaches.

"You must have a splendid assortment of property, Mr. Mulvey," she said. "I've heard it was very hard to please people with rents."

The Honorable Peter's broad face was the picture of blank astonishment.

"Rents?" he queried. "Rents?" Then finally the light of comprehension spread over

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his countenance. " Oh, yis, yis, I understand. Rents, rents, to be sure. Ha, ha, a joke that is, I'm afraid, Mrs. McBride. To tell ye God's truth, I have forgotten the sign on me door for fifteen years." And then the politician looked rather alarmed, as if fearing that his caller was really after an apartment and would put to test the profession under which he was listed in the city directory.

The reporter of *The Banner* believed it still necessary to compliment Peter upon the evidences of his business career. The keen eyes caught for one thing a huge pile of books labelled " Registered Voters, Wards 1 and 2." This was not quite easy for Mrs. McBride, but she ventured an opinion.

" Voters? Oh, I see; they must have tenements."

" Yis, indade," smiled Mr. Mulvey. " They sure do have large families in most of thim."

" And those maps on the wall," said his caller. " What are those?"

" Building lots, you know," returned the Honorable Peter. They were, in fact, maps

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of voting precincts, but why try to explain such things to a non-voting woman?

He wondered if she would ever come to the point, and fidgeted nervously with his big black cigar. Fate was about to help him.

"I suppose," plumped out Mrs. McBride at last, "you are curious to know what I climbed all these tiresome stairs for."

Mr. Peter Mulvey's smile was as expansive as the rest of his personal attributes.

"Well, I'm a Yankee, even if I am Irish."

"I want a story," said the lady.

"Why—why didn't you go to the library?"

"I mean a news story—a story for *The Banner*."

"Well, Phil Dwyer said in a stump speech last winter that I was the biggest liar he knew."

The reporter smiled in spite of herself.

"I don't mean that kind of a story. I mean a truly story."

"Oh, a true story—for the paper? I didn't know *The Banner* wanted that sort."

Mrs. McBride frowned a little at this and

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the Honorable Peter immediately became totally apologetic.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he said. "I wasn't thinking of the society column. Indeed I wasn't. Thim things is always true."

"It isn't a society story I want this time," returned the mollified Clarissa.

The politician rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "If you did, you'd hardly 'a' come to me," he said. "Society and me don't vote in the same booth."

"But," cried Mrs. McBride eagerly, "I do other things on *The Banner*. Now and then I get a 'scoop' on general news. You see that means an extra dollar or two on Saturday. Outside of my regular column, whatever I get printed is paid extra for space."

The Honorable Peter surveyed the undeniable charms of his visitor with no attempt at disguised admiration.

"And that's where ye git thim lovely bonnets and thim"—with a sweeping gesture he indicated the remaining portion of her garments, at which the lady smiled down at

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herself and nodded assent complacently. Mr. Mulvey arose from his chair; pulled it nearer his visitor and sat down. Then he began confidentially:

"I'll tell ye every story I know. Let me see." He hummed gently for a moment and then opened his mouth as if to reveal something of high importance.

"No," he thought in sudden embarrassment, "I can't tell her that one. Well," he said aloud, "I've heard tell that there was once a little girl who lived on the edge of a big wood and she used to go and see her grandmother and in the wood was a sly old wolf—"

"Why, that is 'Little Red Ridinghood,'" exclaimed his visitor with the air of having made an important discovery. Mulvey nodded and grinned broadly.

"Yis, do you know that wan?"

"Yes, indeed," laughed Clarissa, and I'm afraid *The Banner* wouldn't pay for it."

"I arlways thought it was a good story. Well, I know another wan about—"

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But Mrs. McBride had had enough of this kindergarten fooling. She became almost severe.

"I must tell you, Mr. Mulvey, that it isn't that kind of a story I want for *The Banner*."

" No?" queried the big man, good naturedly pursing his lips. She shook her head emphatically.

" No, it's a story of fact that I want. Now I've heard that you know a lot about this telephone fight."

Mulvey's keen eyes suddenly contracted. Here was something totally unexpected, and he was no man to be pumped dry by the society editress of *The Banner*.

" I do know something about it and then again I don't. I wish I knew more than I do. I wish I knew how it was coming out."

" Oh," returned his visitor, in intense disappointment, as indicating the loss of a portion of the coming Saturday's envelope contents, " don't you know that really?"

Mulvey laughed.

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" If I did, I'd be opening a clairvoyancy shop instead of a real estate office."

" Yet everybody says you are the Democratic boss and that you swing things in this city," persisted Mrs. McBride.

This did not appear to displease the Honorable Peter.

" They do, do they?" he observed. " Well, there's a lot of everybodies who know more than anybody. We Democrats are all waiting at the fence rail just now. Thanks to Russ Gray, the people decided last election that the town needed reforming."

" It *did*, didn't it?" asked Mrs. McBride, her blue eyes gazing innocently into the expansive lineaments of Mr. Mulvey.

" Yes," he admitted. " It did so, but when you want reform, don't put reformers in expecting them to do it. The proper thrick is to lassoo the party that's in and force them to cut the cards for reform before election. It may not last, but you're more likely to get it."

At this point Mrs. McBride was so far

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overcome by the importance of the occasion as to do what she knew was not wholly applauded by the profession. She pulled forth her notebook and moistened the tip of her little pencil on her tongue.

"Are there any politics in this telephone business?" she asked. Mulvey's habitual look of good nature was almost eclipsed at the thought suggested by this question.

"Something's got into it, that's sure. Perhaps it *is* politics." And then, as he saw the lady jotting something down in her little book, he went on anxiously: "Say, you aint a-going to quote me, are you?"

"Why, yes," she returned brightly without looking up. "Mayn't I?"

"You say I'm the Democratic boss," said Mulvey sorely. "How long do you think I'd be a boss if I allowed myself to be quoted? That's the way we kill off the candidates.

"Say, Mrs. McBride," he continued in confidential whisper.

"Yes, Mr. Mulvey."

The big politician leaned quite close to

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her ear. It was a pretty, pink, shell-like ear, and it was no penance for Mulvey thus to lean. Perhaps that thought influenced what he said to the fair reporter.

" Promise me you'll keep still till I give the word and I'll tell you all I can now, and when the thing's ripe I'll give ye some yarns that will beat all your shtuff about pink teas and card fights to a custard and put a big streak of fat in your pay envelope. Promise?"

" Certainly," returned Mrs. McBride.

" Well, then, I'll put you wise to some of the crimps in this tie-up," said Peter, grinning expansively. " You see, Gray's bunch of reformers are at the feed trough just now. We Democrats have got to wait until they get filled up before our turn comes again."

Mrs. McBride held out her hands with a neat little gesture of reproach.

" You speak of Gray's crowd, as you call it, as if they were—"

" Hogs? Sure," returned the Honorable Peter. " All reformers are. They thought we were getting too big around the waist and

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cooked up this citizens' movement as a sort of anti-fat treatment. Major Gray doesn't want the Home Telephone Company to get a franchise because Nathan Meyer is the president, and he put in his man Jones as mayor because he will veto any bill Gray tells him to."

This was news, indeed, and Clarissa started with surprise.

"Why," she said, "I thought Major Gray and Nathan Meyer were close friends."

Mulvey smiled grimly.

"So does everybody. I did till a while ago. As near as I can make out, Gray's got the jealous hunch. Meyer's grown very rich the past ten years and Gray—well, he hasn't. In fact, I guess he's in pretty heavy on one or two deals that don't pan out well. He's banked heavy on 'phone stock and even the threat of a new company has tumbled the shares. If it got the franchise it wouldn't do a thing to Gray's wad."

"Well it certainly isn't just friendly for Mr. Meyer—" began Mrs. McBride.

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"Just cut that out of your copy when you write the story," commanded Mulvey. "Meyer went into the 'phone business because he knew the people wanted good service and wanted to pay for it and men of his race are accustomed to sell people what they want."

"Yes, but still—" she persisted.

"Besides, Meyer didn't know Gray was in 'phone stock heavy. It wasn't generally known anyway. Meyer himself owns several hundred shares in the old company. Even those foxy old guys get stuck sometimes."

What more might have been said by the politician, Mrs. McBride was not to know until long afterward, for at that moment there came the heavy tread of men tramping up the rickety old stairs. Mulvey pulled out his immense gold watch as if it were some new and improved engagement book.

"Connor's gang from the Sixth," he said to himself. Then to Mrs. McBride: "There's a rather rough crowd due here in a minute to see me—brokers, you know, and—er—real estate men, and er—oh, hang it all—"

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Mrs. McBride was equal to the occasion. "You want me to go," she said with a smile as she arose and shook her pretty garments carefully as if rather distrustful of Mr. Mulvey's furniture. "Well, I'll be off, but I have your promise, you know."

"I'll keep you posted," said Mulvey heartily, but in a half whisper. "You'll know as much about this 'phone shindy—as I know about the voting list. And now good day to ye."

As the Honorable Peter bowed out his visitor, the crowd of his friends and retainers had just reached the door. They, too, salaamed to her with profound respect in imitation of their great chief.

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IV

HE final "Saturday" of the Crest Canoe Club had been a pronounced success, at least that portion of it that was already past. The races and other water sports had been run off to the applause of the gathered hundreds in the afternoon and now as evening approached the beginnings of the illumination of house, floats and lake were already dimly pricking themselves out against the mellow gold of an autumnal sunset. A young moon had established its pale crescent in the west and the glory of the stars was already prophesied.

Over the darkening waters of the lake, canoeists were gliding in every direction, most of them already decorated with paper lanterns and a few glaring with red fire. It was a scene to delight the senses, a bit of human fairyland, where sky and air and man's cunning contrivances with candles

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and electricity all combined to create a bewitching ensemble. So thought, doubtless, many a pair of lovers floating over this darkly golden sea, and so thought many an elder watching the endless procession of canoes pass between them and the glory of the west.

But to one paddler on the lake, at least, the picture did not appeal. He propelled his canoe with uneven strokes, now swift, now lazy, now nervously irritable, and occasionally he splashed clumsily with his paddle and came near to oversetting the frail and sensitive craft.

"Paul, dear, be careful or we'll have to swim for it," said the young girl who was half reclining on cushions in the bottom of the canoe and facing her brother.

The young man muttered some unintelligible phrase, but dipped his blade with noticeably greater care.

"What is the matter with you, Paul?" asked Doris earnestly. "You really don't seem to enjoy paddling your sister about."

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And then, as there was no response to that undeniable truth,—" That's the way with brothers. I suppose there's more than one fellow back on the float who'd risk a cold bath to oust you from your seat in this craft."

The brother frowned and growled—

" They can have it, and—and—"

" And welcome, eh?" suggested the girl. " Might as well say it as look it. You're as complimentary as you are sociable. Now see here, Paul," she went on, changing her tone to one of great seriousness, " I'll tell you why I asked you before them all to take me down to the river. You couldn't very well refuse then and I wanted to have a good talk with you."

The boy shifted restlessly on his stern seat and placed his paddle across his knee, preparatory to lighting a cigarette. Nor was his nervousness lost upon his pretty sister.

" I know you don't want to talk with me alone," she said gently. " That's why you avoid me as much as possible at home. What is it that troubles you, Paul dear?

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You know I'd do anything in the world to make you happy."

"Oh, I'm happy enough."

"I don't understand, Paul, why you are so different since you came home from New York."

"Different? What do you mean?" said the boy, attempting to tinge his voice with astonishment.

"You know what I mean, Paul. You are solemn and moody and irritable. What has happened to you?"

"Oh, nothing much," returned the brother with a laugh that was a self-evident effort. "Nothing much. I'm only in debt and the governor won't help me out." His sister's eyes grew grave.

"Is it much?" she asked.

"Oh,—five hundred dollars, and unless I can raise it I'm ruined." His voice broke here with real emotion. There was no mistaking the genuineness of his state. "Ruined, Doris," he continued, "ruined, I tell you."

"Oh my dear, my dear," said the sym-

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pathetic girl, her eyes moistening with feeling. "It can't be so bad as that. Tell me about it. Perhaps I can help you."

"I can't tell you, Doris, and you can't help me."

"Oh, perhaps I can," cried his sister eagerly. "I have the diamond brooch of mother's and some rings. Take them and sell them."

Paul's eyes glistened for an instant with the light of a new-born hope, and then he shook his head slowly but emphatically:

"No, I'm a bad egg, Doris, but not so bad as that."

"But I insist!"

"Don't mention it again," cried Paul firmly. "It's awfully good of you, sis, but I won't make a bad matter worse. I've disgraced myself, and when father knows he will never forgive me. But I'll go away somewhere and begin over again."

"And leave college?" cried the girl. "Paul, you shall not! Whatever you've done, I'll stand by you."

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The boy was moved at last from his sullenness:

"Dear old girl," he said humbly enough, "I don't deserve your love."

"Paul, if—if you'd ask Max Meyer, he'd help you—I'm sure of it." said Doris with a timidity that she knew was but too apparent.

"What! Go to him? Well, I guess not! I'm in the hands of one Jew already," cried the lad bitterly.

"Paul!" exclaimed his sister with gentle reproof, and then lapsed into silence.

So on they floated toward the club-house until, within perhaps a mile of that structure that was now gleaming and flaming in the gathering darkness like a group of scattered brilliants, they fell in with another canoeist, who was propelling his craft alone. This was George Clarke, a young lawyer who was fast making his way from the early starvation of a legal squatter to the fame and fortune of a successful man at the bar.

He was a stalwart young fellow and prided himself upon his skill in canoeing. There-

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fore, as the two dainty boats came abreast, he cried across the darkening gulf of water:

"Race you to the float, Paul?"

Without a word young Gray shut his teeth; tightened his grip upon his maple blade and silently, but with the beautifully applied strength of a master at this sort of sport, went at his work and said never a word until he had landed his sister on the float three lengths ahead of Clarke's canoe.

"Good evening, Miss Doris," said the lawyer as they walked up the steps to the flashing club-house, now echoing to the laughter and the chatter of its hundreds of merry makers. "And how are you, Paul?"

"Oh, I'm getting better," drawled the lad with intentional affectation—"slowly." He busied himself lighting his pipe without further attempt at conversation.

The other laughed. "I suppose you'll dismiss the doctor soon," he said.

The young fellow deigned never a word but marched off, pipe in mouth, to the locker section, joining a coterie of youngsters

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whose faces were flushed by something besides exercise and whose laugh was a bit too joyous.

Doris looked after him with anxiety in her pretty eyes, but she let herself be led away for solid refreshment by Clarke, whose attitude toward her was, at any rate, not brotherly.

As they sat at the open-air table on the veranda, listening to the music of the band and delighting their eyes with the beauty of the scene, little Jane Gray, with her father, the major, spied them from afar off and hastened to join them.

The major was a tall and handsome man with a gray imperial that bore out, to the eye at least, his reputation as a hard fighter in the great war. He wore eye-glasses with the old-fashioned black rubber rims and attached around his neck by a broad ribbon of silk. He was jerky of speech and nervously unquiet in manner. No sooner was he seated at the table than he began to drum out military tunes on the wood, keeping time with the band and tapping his well-shod feet on the

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floor as if they had somehow remembered the old marching days at the front.

In a moment or two up bustled Clarissa McBride, dashing about from table to table with her notebook gathering material for what was to be a *magnum opus* in the next morning's *Banner*. Clarissa, kind though her heart was, was inclined unconsciously to patronize the less fortunate daughter of Major Gray, and Jane resented the implied pity and treated it with acid words.

"Ah, Miss Gray, have you just arrived?" asked the reporter. "I was surprised not to have seen you earlier in the afternoon."

"H'm," returned Jane. "Who'd take *me* in a canoe? Besides, I never was in one. I'd have to be lifted in and out."

What else the little girl might have said remained within her own consciousness, because of the diversion then offered by the approach of a snorting, puffing motor boat from the dimness of the lake. An insolently brilliant searchlight was swinging its arc of revelation from the bow of the approaching

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craft, and as it came to the float the band changed its tune and struck up, "See the Conquering Hero Comes."

"His Honor, the Mayor," announced Mrs. McBride sarcastically. "The idea of coming to a canoe meet in one of those deafeners. Wanted to make everybody hear him, I guess. That's more than he can do when he's making a speech."

The major arose hastily and proceeded to meet and greet the executive. No sooner had he shaken hands with the great man than the two hastily walked apart from the rest, their heads close together.

"I wouldn't have come to-night," a close listener might have heard Major Gray say to His Honor, "but I wanted to see you sure and you know it would hardly do for me to be seen at your house in the evening. There's an appropriation bill coming before the council next week for the purchase of a site for the new almshouse. It's my land that the committee has selected and the Democrats may have something to say about it."

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"Yes, I was thinking they might," said the mayor in the high-pitched, squeaky voice that was his birthright.

He stretched his little figure in the vain attempt to get his wide-spreading ears nearer the major's mouth. He was an apologetic gentleman in his intercourse with humanity in general, always seeming to make excuses for his own existence. It had long been the standing marvel of the town how he had ever plucked up courage enough to become a public candidate.

Deep in his keen little mind, however, he was bold enough and Major Gray knew that once his determination was made and his word given, not even the gentlemen higher up who had made him what he was could turn him from his course.

"Well," said the major, "talk about the site will be unpleasant. Better try and fix it to choke off debate. You can do it, if you choose, and it'll come late in the evening. Besides," he added sententiously, "it's a good site, the best available."

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" Oh, yes," squeaked the mayor with a grin that was almost luminous in the gloom and that brought his chin and nose perilously near together. " Oh, yes, the best available; by all means the best available."

With this they separated, the major to return to his family and the mayor to go inside the club-house where his dutiful citizens were even now being persuaded to pass by him in review.

At the major's table Doris and Jane and Mrs. McBride were finishing up their ices.

" Dull, aint it?" said Clarissa through the melting of a lump of sherbet.

" Why, I thought it was delightful," said Doris brightly. " Such a night, such air, such lights, such visions of the lake."

" Oh, I suppose so," said Clarissa with her most blasé air. " But I see so much of this sort of thing in the way of business! And speaking of business, I must be sure my list of those here is all right."

Doris smiled. " Just say ' everybody worth while ' and it will be all right."

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But Clarissa shook her head and busied herself with her notes.

"Oh, there's lots of the big-bugs not here. There's the Anthony Morells and the Dexters and Nathan Meyer. He's celebrating at home, I suppose. You know Max came to-day," she added, suddenly raising her eyes to Doris.

"No, I didn't," said the girl.

She paused and looked thoughtfully far over the head of her neighbor and at the tiny silver crescent in the sky, which was just now enclosing within its arms a new-born star. Then she added slowly:

"I should think he'd have come to the meet. He used to be fond of canoeing."

"Gracious," cried Mrs. McBride suddenly, after peering around Doris' head in her usual fashion. "The mayor's going to speak. Even the lights are going out. I'm off. I simply can't stand that man."

Doris and Jane sat silent, neither in the mood for conversation. Once more Doris' eyes swept that portion of the lake where

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lovers' canoes did most abound, each occupied by the eternal pair.

"Yes," she thought, "I should think he might have come."

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V

HERE was an air of something new and something strange over the general offices of the banking house of Meyer—" Meyer & Son," as the world was now informed by brand-new gilded signs and gold-leaf lettering on the windows. The clerks were in a sort of holiday attire and there was a feeling of something out of the ordinary as exhibited by them, the buzzing of subdued talk and a general appearance of lack of attention to the affairs of the house.

Jacob Strauss strode back and forth from high desk to low table and from swivel chair to elevated stool, plainly nervous and ever on the point of remonstrating with the younger generation of Gentiles for their self-evident disregard of duty. Jacob, too, was not wholly his old self, for in the lapel of his long and well-worn frock coat he had placed a gay blossom which looked strangely

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at odds, in a dandified sort of way, with the almost rabbinical face of its wearer.

The gilded hands of the big clock over the bookkeeper's desk were fast travelling toward noon. And yet nothing had happened to justify the unusual stir in the place. Nathan Meyer had been in his inner sanctum two hours and he had never once summoned even Jacob, a sure sign that something was wrong.

"What can have detained him?" murmured the ancient retainer under his breath, pacing up and down and pausing every now and then at one of the windows, where the glorious new insignia of "Meyer & Son" sparkled in the light of day. Occasionally he stopped and formed the name silently upon his lips. Then he would go to a window at every sound of wheels and peer up and down the street.

"The old boy is off his perch," snickered young Armstrong, nudging a fellow clerk in the ribs. "He's waiting for the fatted calf who don't seem to make his appearance. Wonder what's up anyway?"

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At last Strauss could bear the suspense no longer. He took the initiative boldly and proceeded into the presence of his chief.

" Oughtn't I to call up the house and see what has detained Max?" he asked eagerly.

" As you please, Jacob," returned Nathan.

So Jacob returned to the glare of office publicity and sat down at the telephone. Beginning to speak in his low, well modulated tones, it was only a few moments before he had aroused the attention of the whole office by the violence of his words.

" Central," he shouted. " I asked you for Main 2-4-5, not 4-5-2. What? I *did* ask for 4-5-2? Thank you," he laughed bitterly into the dark cone of the mouthpiece as if to annihilate his feminine enemy on the other end. " I suppose I've lost my mind. What? Oh !"

The old man slammed the receiver down on the desk and arose from his seat, his hands upraised and trembling with wrath. Then perceiving young Armstrong approaching with a bundle of letters and laughing immoderately

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he thought better of himself and sat down again.

" She said she'd known that a long time. Such a service. The worst in the world. I'll say a word to that young woman. I'll tell her what I think of her." He picked up the receiver and called tremulously and softly: " Central Central." Then his voice grew angry and louder. " Central, I want to tell you something. Just one little word, my *dear*."

His eyes and the expression of his voice showed how eagerly he was listening, but without result. Armstrong, who had recovered his gravity somewhat, tapped the old man lightly on the shoulder with the letters.

" The mail, Mr. Strauss."

" Damn the mail," snarled Jacob. " I mean give it to me," saying which he laid the receiver on his desk and arose, his thin fingers grasping the letters as if prey in the talons of a huge bird.

" Come with me, Armstrong," he said, and

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they disappeared into one of the many private offices on the outskirts of Meyer & Son's general room. Arrived within, old Strauss was once more possessed of his idea of telephoning.

" You sit there, Julian," he said, " and ask for Main 2-4-5. When you get it call me, if I am still living."

" I will, sir," said the young man. " I think I know something about this telephone which you may not." Upon which he sat himself at the desk and took up the receiver with an air of sublime youthful confidence.

The old man viewed the beginning of his attempt with a caustic smile.

" And they won't give us a franchise for the new company with such a thing as that," he said, then turned his attention to the letters, which he opened with deft sweeps of the long forefinger which had for many years served him as a personal paper-cutter.

" Central," observed Julian with the utmost deference. " Central, I say, Central."

" He'll need a cough-drop before he is

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through," muttered the old man to himself.

"Central, Central"—a little more vigor with each word—then—"Confound the girl. She must be asleep."

But all at once Jacob Strauss lost all interest in the young clerk and his attempts to wrest from the telephone service some sort of satisfaction. He had opened one of the letters and his heart beat violently as he read it through and its import struck home. He even thumped his desk excitedly, oblivious of the presence of Armstrong, who watched him with care, yet from time to time called "Central" in a perfunctory sort of way and in a low tone, in order that he might the better ascertain, if possible, the cause of the old Jew's emotion. He was rewarded in a moment by hearing Jacob mutter under his breath:

"Why, this is the one thing Nathan needs to bring Gray to terms. But wait. Let me make sure."

With one swift movement, he pulled open the drawer of the desk at which he was

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sitting and took from it a large, round magnifying glass. His fingers trembling, he held the letter under the focus of the crystal and closely scanned every word upon the paper. Then he nodded his head twice or thrice as if in great satisfaction. He even rubbed his hands together, which Julian knew for a sure sign of absolute joy.

"I think, Major Russell Gray," he murmured, "you'll listen to us now about that telephone franchise."

All at once the old man, with a shock, remembered Julian's presence, but, as he glanced at him, the young man was still busily engaged at the receiver.

"Say, Central, wake up there," he cried. "I want Main 2-4-5. What? By George, I've got her at last. Yes, Main 2-4-5. What? Oh, fudge."

He hung the receiver back on the hook with disgust stamped all over his youthful countenance.

"The line is busy," he said to Jacob, who had been slowly approaching him, as if to

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study the effect of his involuntary disclosure. "It always *is*."

The old man laid a hand softly upon Armstrong's shoulder, then increased his grip until he seemed almost desirous of dislocating the bone. Still his voice was mild and low.

"I have a habit, my young friend, of talking to myself at times," he said. "Did you happen to hear what I remarked just now?"

"Why, I—" stammered the youngster. "You see, Mr. Strauss—"

"I see," answered the other, his small, hawk's eyes gazing into Armstrong's face. "You heard. Well, you will proceed to forget it utterly. If you do not, your place here will be filled by some one else the moment I have reason to think your memory is not asleep. You quite understand me, Julian?"

The other never lost his self-possession or that charming air of bonhomie for which he was celebrated at the various social functions of the Bank Clerks' Association.

"Rather," he said with great cordiality. "You never said anything. I never heard

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anything. I was dreaming. By the way, sir, I can't get your number. The line is busy."

"Very well, my young friend," said Strauss sardonically. "See that it remains busy. Now take these letters in to Rankin. Tell him to look up the Kelly Company correspondence and let me have theirs of June 20."

"Correct, sir," said the young fellow, taking the missives and starting for the door. "By the way, Mr. Strauss, I can tell you how to beat that 'phone if you want to call any one in a hurry."

Jacob turned sharply, with no amusement on his lank countenance,

"How?" he asked grimly.

"Go and see 'em," said Julian with a grin, making a hurried exit to escape any other commissions.

At that precise moment, Strauss was aroused by a cheer and applause from the clerks outside. His eyes filled with a light as radiant as that ever called forth by the worship of his religion.

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"At last," he cried, raising his hands to heaven. "At last."

On the very threshold of his door as he went out, he was met by the object of his adoration.

Max Meyer had his father's sturdy build, but with added inches. He had his dark complexion and handsome eyes, but with scarce a trace of the Hebraic mark that had been set upon the elder Meyer. His body was of the build of an athlete but his face was the face of a poet. When he smiled, which was rarely, he seemed to have the faculty of embracing the whole world within the radiance of his countenance. He rarely grew excited, but excitement could at times, they said, transform him into a raging volcano. He was calm enough now, though smiling, too, as he met the old man at the door.

"Oh, this is your den, is it?" he said pleasantly. "I was looking for father and actually it is so long since my occasional visits here that I've forgotten which is his room."

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Jacob Strauss found difficulty in speaking, so strong was the emotion that gripped his every faculty. Finally he found presence of mind enough to mutter something about its being " a great day, a great day."

" Yes, it is a fine day," returned Max— " for the season, an extraordinarily fine day."

Old Strauss, still almost speechless, preceded his guest into the main office as a sort of self-appointed guide to the intricacies of the establishment. He raised a thin hand to the windows, attempting to call Max's attention to the new lettering. For a time the younger Meyer failed to realize what his father's ancient friend was driving at.

" Oh, yes, I see," he said at last. " 'Meyer & Son.' I certainly will have to be a real business man now. Father was insistent that I should come down to-day and sign some papers of some sort."

" The partnership papers," said Jacob in tones of awe. Nothing on earth, save perhaps the adornments of the synagogue, could have been to him more solemn and worthy of

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reverence. "Yes, the partnership papers. Come with me and you shall sign them in the presence of your father."

"Good morning, Max," said Nathan Meyer as the little procession of two walked slowly into the banker's private office. They shook hands with a cordiality that bespoke long years of kindly understanding and mutual regard.

In a moment Jacob had adjusted his typewritten documents and spread them out on one side of the great mahogany table desk. He coughed once or twice and shuffled the papers more than once or twice in the endeavor to attract to them the attention of the young man who was chatting with his father. Finally, by a superhuman exhibition of energy, he obtained his point.

"These are the papers I am to sign, are they?" asked Max, with less concern than he would have shown in inquiring about the signing of a rent contract in Paris.

"They are, sir," said Nathan impressively.

The young man picked up his pen, dipped

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it and prepared to affix his signature in the most likely place. Then old Jacob laid a lingering hand on his arm. Nathan Meyer smiled.

" Jacob insists upon some little formalities," he said as the old man went to the door opened it and beckoned towards an unseen crowd.

In a moment as many of the office staff as could be compressed into the private office were looking at Max Meyer signing the papers that made him a part of " Meyer & Son." The old Hebrew affixed the seals and he and another employé set their manuals as witnesses.

Then Jacob proceeded with superb dignity to a closet set in the side of the wall; opened it; brought forth a bottle of the finest Rhenish wine—his treasure since the day of his marriage to Rebecca, now dead and gone these many years—and poured it forth for the proper sealing of the contract.

All drank the health of the house and of the new partner, who, at the very moment

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the toast was completed, picked up his hat, evidently in a hurry to depart.

"I have an important engagement down town," he said to his father.

Jacob Strauss' face took on a look of gloom unutterable. Was the new partner of Meyer & Son to regard no higher his supreme importance than to depart at once from the scene of the consecration? Then his face brightened as he thought of an excuse for his favorite.

"A business engagement, I dare say, Mr. Max," he suggested hopefully.

"Yes, Jacob," replied the young man.

All the joy of the world returned and settled upon the face of the old servant of the house.

"A great day, a great day," he cried again rubbing his hands tumultuously together. "But do not go, I pray you, till you have done at least one thing by your authority as of Meyer & Son."

Max looked at his father as if still unwilling to proceed without his suggestion. The elder smiled.

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"Jacob is a little superstitious," he observed, " but it will do no harm to humor him."

" I don't know what to do with my new authority," said the young partner good-humoredly. " I *have* authority, have I?"

Jacob Strauss swept the space of a half circumference with his hands as one meaning there was no limit whatever to the power of a partner of Meyer & Son. Nathan nodded assent.

" Well, then," cried Max, " as you say it is regarded as a great day when my name is tacked to the man who has made the name honorable and honored in this city, perhaps it is my best plan to make it memorable to all connected with the house—our house. I therefore," he continued, turning to the clerks, " order a holiday for the rest of to-day and to-morrow."

The father laughed; the employés cheered and Jacob Strauss was speechless with unnamed horror. But there was no help for it. Max left relentlessly and the clerks scuttled off to find their hats and coats and to celebrate

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in an unheard-of manner the accession of the new member of the house. Even Nathan Meyer prepared to go, reminding Jacob jocosely that all must obey orders.

Thus they left the old man alone. When quiet reigned in the offices, he went and sat in the chair at Max Meyer's closed desk. For many minutes he remained there, his eyes half shut and his hands clasped in front of him. A ray of sunlight stole in at last and touched with its glow the nosegay that had that morning been renewed in honor of the young partner.

Seeing which, the old man laughed silently as with a great and inexpressible joy. Then he, too, put on the garments of the street and with his faithful stick and a last rapturous gaze at the firm name in the windows, locked the great outside door and went home.

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VI

THE Honorable Peter Mulvey rolled over on his side in the comfortable bed in his comfortable apartments in the Hotel Jarvis and greeted the morning with a snort. It was his customary way of arousing himself to the duties and responsibilities of the day, for he believed that it cleared his brain of the cobwebs spun by the night and freshened his perceptions for whatever might present itself for consideration.

The Honorable Peter affected a hotel because he had found, from long experience, that it was an ideal place to see those he wanted to see and to avoid those whom he wanted to avoid. He had ascertained, what many others have also found to be true, that bell-boys were without consciences and that, for a monthly consideration, they would render it impossible to find him when an undesirable card was sent up from the desk.

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On this special morning, Mr. Mulvey, after his matutinal snort, half raised his body on the fat pillows and rested his head on one hand. This was a position he was wont to take when some specially knotty problem demanded solution. There seemed to Mr. Mulvey some magnetic current of thought between his hand and his brain. The brain meant planning and the hand meant action. The two united made for the Honorable Peter a very forcible equipment.

After a few moments' cogitation in this pose, Mr. Mulvey appeared to have reached a decision and he jumped out of bed and into the tub of cold water he invariably drew the night before, that it might acquire the temperature of the rooms. He shivered somewhat as he felt the keen October air rushing through the wide-open windows.

After the dispatching of breakfast in his room and the reception of a few telephone messages, all of which put an air of great satisfaction upon his rubicund countenance, the Honorable Peter donned his big black

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hat and sallied forth for the deeds of the day. Even thus early the great man was not permitted to go through the streets unhonored, for more than once he was met by some of his political protegés, proud of the opportunity of shaking his hand.

Mr. Mulvey's destination was the office of Meyer & Son, and arriving there he was ushered through the general banking room to the private office of the elder partner. Its only occupant was old Strauss, who was leaning over the great desk of his chief, carefully examining with a magnifying glass a narrow, oblong sheet of paper.

Mr. Mulvey's keen eyes carefully noted this operation and they also noted that the old Hebrew suddenly thrust it away under some other papers with an obvious air of confusion. It was not the Honorable Peter's method, however, to comment upon any such episodes as these.

"Where's Nathan?" he asked.

"Gone out, Mr. Mulvey."

"And Max?"

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Jacob made a great show of looking over some letters the boy had just brought from the post office.

"Max? Why, I have to forward his mail."

"Gone away, is he?" observed Mulvey cheerfully.

Jacob shook his head.

"Ill?"

Another and more vigorous shake. Then, as if unable to endure his feelings longer in silence, the old man rose and went swiftly to the junior partner's immaculate desk.

"Look," he cried, "this hasn't been opened once since Max entered the firm." He brought up the top with an angry snap. "Look, not a scratch on the varnish; not a spot on the blotter and the ink dry in the well."

Down came the top again with the added viciousness of gravity.

"Might belong to a blind man instead of a banker," said Jacob.

Mr. Mulvey laid a hand on the old Jew's shoulder in kindly fashion.

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"Cheer up, Jake," he said. "Blind men don't get into the penitentiary—and bankers sometimes do. Max is all right. He's just at the age when it's a joy to do what no one expects you to do. But he'll outgrow that. Give him a chance. I tell you what—let's get him into politics. That'll knock any damn nonsense out of him."

Jacob shook his head dubiously.

"What's he been doing?" asked Mulvey.

"It's what he's *not* been doing. After he left college he went abroad, as you know. He finally settled down in Paris, and stayed there until Nathan sent for him, a month ago, and took him into partnership."

"Oh, I see!" observed Peter with a grin. "He got tangled up over there with some girl. Ah, he'll get over it. He's only twenty-six."

"You're wrong again," returned Strauss glumly. "He didn't get 'tangled up' with any girl. He got a lot of fool ideas in his head about 'literature.'" He sunk his voice to a horrified whisper. "He's a *scribbler*, Mul-

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vey! He covers reams of paper with his ideas about life, and death and 'love.' Bah! I found a lot of the stuff in some of Max's papers. He's a *dreamer*, I tell you! He has no interest in business, and thinks money is only a thing to *spend!*"

A despairing gesture accompanied this terrifying opinion.

"Oh! What *is* it for, then?" laughed Mr. Mulvey.

Jacob turned sharply upon him and cried with something akin to eloquence:

"To give you influence—power—command! That's what money is for, Mulvey—not to 'spend'! And here's Nathan, who for years has been planning for his boy to succeed him, who has been working for the day when 'Meyer & Son' would stand for the greatest private banking house in the Middle West—and what has it amounted to? Max has come home a fool, and his father has no one to lean on!"

"Oh, it's not so bad as that, I guess," said the Honorable Peter soothingly. "I'm sorry

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Nathan's not in. I wanted to see him about the franchise."

"Are you going to get it?" queried Strauss eagerly.

"Not unless we can gag Major Gray."

"Um—m. Perhaps that's not so hard as you think."

"What's up? Anything new?" Mulvey demanded.

"No—no," returned the old man with rather too evident haste. "I mean, perhaps you haven't tried hard enough. This is normally a Democratic town and you're the Democratic boss. You ought to be able to swing things as you want. Why don't you get busy?"

"Busy? Busy? For the past two months I've been as busy as a terrier at a woodchuck's hole. Busy? I've been like a ward heeler who's trimming all parties in a triangular fight."

And snorting his disgust at Strauss' imputations upon his professional alacrity, Honorable Mr. Mulvey bounced out of the office.

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Had Mr. Mulvey chosen to proceed down the street instead of up, he would have met one of the very men for whom he had inquired, Max Meyer, and, with his astuteness, he would have gathered from the expression on the young man's face that he was perplexed at something. At the same time he might have been at a loss to account for the look of satisfaction that seemed to be struggling with the perplexity.

At any rate, Jacob Strauss was sufficiently astonished by the appearance of the junior partner, and still more so when that young man observed:

"I'm expecting a caller—a lady. When she comes please ask her to step into the inner office."

Max had that morning received a letter which informed him that Miss Doris Gray wanted to see him on an urgent matter and begged permission to call on him at the office of his firm. This missive puzzled him much, for he had met the young lady at the theatre two nights before and had every expectation

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of seeing her on the evening to come, at the first of the Charity Club's assemblies.

There was little time left for speculation, however, for the squawk of an automobile horn at the door told him instinctively that his caller had arrived.

Doris swept through the general office with her usual almost haughty air and though she was heavily veiled Jacob Strauss recognized her and bade her good morning in the same tone he would have taken towards some feminine client of the house. The expression of his face as he looked after her might not have entirely pleased the junior partner of the firm.

But to that young gentleman Doris apologized sweetly for her call—an attitude Max thought entirely unnecessary.

"I came to see you, Max, because generally when we meet there are so many others about. There is something near to my heart I want to say to you, and I feel I can no longer delay it."

"Yes, Doris," he answered with gentle

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courtesy. "Whatever you wish shall be my pleasure to do."

Then for many minutes the young girl poured out her very soul over the strange bearing of her brother Paul.

"All I have told is nothing," she said at last. "Indeed, I really have nothing upon which to base my fears, except woman's intuition. Father knows something of what troubles Paul, but I have not felt it would help matters to go to him. I knew that you would understand—" there was something in the emphasis on the pronoun that stirred the heart of the young man more than he would have confessed—"for you were boys together, playing, and," she added with a smile, "quarrelling, too, sometimes, I remember—in the same street before father built the new house. But I fear for Paul. Since coming home from college this time he has seemed moody and irritable—and—Max, he has said things about you that—that have hurt me."

"Strange, Doris, very strange," murmured the other. "Paul and I were the best of

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friends before I went away and I've seen him but once since he came home from New York. Nothing has happened between us, I assure you. I don't understand it."

"Nor I, either," said the young girl sadly. "Some change has taken place in Paul. Max, I care for him with more than the ordinary love of sister for brother. You know what he has been to me. You know that since my mother's death, when we were all young, I have tried in a weak way to take her place to Paul. If any harm should come to him it would be more than I could bear."

She laid her hand with charming frankness upon the young man's arm.

"Max, if I need your help for Paul at any time may I call upon you?"

Max Meyer's dark face grew eloquent with emotion.

"Doris," he cried, "call me to whatever service you will, I shall respond."

As the girl left the banking house, Nathan Meyer had just entered it. She did not see

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the senior partner as she passed out and therefore could not know the strange look of intensity he threw after her and how he stroked his pointed beard as if in meditation.

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VII

NATHAN MEYER passed on into his private office, observing to Jacob Strauss as he went:

"I met Mulvey on the street just now. He's coming back. I shall be using the long-distance 'phone. After I finish show him in."

The old retainer nodded and a few moments later beheld the stalwart politician occupying more than the allotted room of an ordinary caller in the general offices. Informed that he must wait, he set about whistling snatches from the repertory of his favorite tunes.

His keen eyes noted that Max soon came out from his father's room and crossed to another of the private offices. He wagged his head towards the younger partner with a significant look at old Strauss.

"On the job, eh?"

The old man shook his head mournfully.

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"Not business. A social engagement—here—at—the—office!"

The ancient Hebrew's voice rose in a crescendo of horror at the thought of such unprofessional doings.

The big Irishman laughed.

"A skirt, eh? That's going some in business hours."

Jacob resented criticism from the outside.

"It was an old friend," he explained gravely, "Miss Gray—Doris Gray."

"So ho!" exploded Peter with a most suggestive wink. "So, ho—I've heard our young friend's mushy in that quarter. Gone dippy—" Noting the blank expanse of old Jacob's face he condescended to explain: "Well, then, to deal plumb on the table, in love with her."

"In love with Gray's daughter?" cried Jacob in astonishment. "With Doris Gray?"

"Well, upon my soul, why not?" queried Mr. Mulvey. "She's a dream."

The old Jew drew himself up proudly and looked at Mulvey sternly.

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"We are Jews of the Jews," he intoned solemnly, his right hand upraised, "and her father is our enemy."

"Wow, wow, says the fox," cried Mulvey in a voice that began to carry over the entire office. "Isn't it nature? Max and the major's children have grown up together. Ate the same mud pies. Max went to Columbia and Paul had to play tag. Tell me, now, what have the children to do with the grudge of the fathers?"

"You don't understand, Mulvey; Jew and Gentile may grow up together, do business together, esteem each other, but—there the line is drawn. Look around you and see."

"H'm," murmured Mr. Mulvey thoughtfully. "So that's your dope, is it? Doesn't seem right, just the same. We are all flesh and blood. We are born alike and we live, love, suffer and die alike. What's the use of all these pin-head distinctions between man and man? Who'll care a hundred years from now, or twenty for that matter?"

His argument fell upon ears of stone.

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" You can't abolish the habit of centuries in a day, Mulvey, and I wouldn't if I could."

The politician smiled. " You're what the spellbinders call an ' obstructionist,' Jake, and they're going out of fashion. The world is changing so fast in manners, religion and thought that you fellows will need a spy-glass to bring it into your range of vision if you don't wake up."

The sound of Nathan's bell for Jacob broke off this controversy.

" Mr. Meyer is ready for you now, Mr. Mulvey."

They found Nathan busy at his desk. He wheeled around as his visitor entered.

" How are you, Mulvey?" he cried cordially. " What's doing?"

The Honorable Peter grinned. " Nothing," he replied. " We've got to start something."

" Sit down," said Meyer. " There's *The Banner*. Maybe you can find something in it. I can't. I'll be with you in a moment."

At this the Honorable Peter took a seat near the desk and lighted one of his Brob-

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dignagian cigars. The banker took from his pocket a package of papers, enclosed them in a long manila envelope and after sealing it made a swift endorsement on the back.

Had the Honorable Peter, who usually had an eye out for every event, however trifling, not been so busily engaged in the society columns of *The Banner* he would have noticed that old Strauss picked up a letter and a slip of paper from his own desk, stood hesitating a moment, then shook his head and placed them in a drawer.

He did observe, however, that at this instant Nathan wheeled sharply around in his chair.

"Jake, put this in the safe," he said sharply. "It's personal," and he turned to making notes again with his firm, rapidly moving fingers. "Just a moment, Mulvey," he cried.

"No hurry," returned Peter good-naturedly.

He felt Jacob's wary touch on his shoulder and looked around to see a warning finger.

"Don't mention Max," said Strauss.

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Peter nodded with complete comprehension and Jacob left the room, muttering: "I hope he'll hold his tongue. It's more than *I* can do, old fool."

"Now, then," said the banker quietly, "I hear Jones has at last declared openly that he'll veto the franchise bill if it comes to him. Can we pass it over his veto?"

Mulvey puffed thrice on his black cigar and blew the smoke as far as his powerful lungs would permit. Then he replied slowly:

"I should say not. I can manage a bare majority vote, but a two-thirds—say, you don't know how damned honest this new gang is—just now. Only two of them for sale and I've got 'em both."

Nathan was in no mood to argue the ethics of the question of the conscientiousness of individuals in particular. It was broad results he was after.

"What ground does Jones take?" he asked impatiently.

"That two companies would cost subscribers more and impair the service of both."

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"Bah," said the banker contemptuously. "What does he say to our contention—that the present monopoly is looking for exclusive rights; that its service is rotten and its rates excessive?"

By reason of Nathan Meyer's excitement and Mulvey's close attention to him, neither perceived the entrance of the junior partner. He went quietly to his desk and made as if to unroll its top at last.

"Turn the key on that, Nathan," exclaimed the Honorable Peter. "You know why we can't get the franchise. Russell Gray stands in the way and we've got to smash him good and hard. The question before the house is," he exclaimed oratorically, leaning towards the banker and waving a fat hand before his very mouth, "the question is, '*How are we going to do it?*'"

"The answer should be interesting." The well-modulated voice struck a new note in the discussion.

Mulvey turned and saw Max looking at him and Nathan with a smile.

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The banker's keen face showed satisfaction. "What do you mean, Max?" he asked.

"I mean that to 'smash' the man who stands in your way is the simple teaching of modern commerce. As you can hardly use a club, father, Mr. Mulvey's question is still in order—How are you going to 'smash' the major?"

The elder Meyer shifted in his chair. "This is my affair, Max," he said blandly—"begun long before you came home."

"Perhaps the young man can point out a nice, *painless* way of getting what we want," broke in Mulvey.

"I can point out this, Mr. Mulvey: no man who considers his honor will take a thing by foul means that he can't get by fair."

The politician laughed indulgently, but the banker rose impatiently.

"You don't understand, Max," he said decisively. "This new telephone company is needed, but Gray is my personal enemy. He's fighting me; not the company—me," and he pounded his right fist into the left

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palm as if there lay between them, to be crushed, all of Major Gray's obstinacy.

The son was unconvinced. "On what grounds is he fighting you, father?" he asked. "Remember I have been away a long time."

"On what grounds?" repeated the elder, pacing up and down. "On what grounds? Simply because I'm prosperous—and a Jew."

Max protested with both voice and outstretched hands.

"Oh, no, it can't be that," he cried. "Why, we've known him all our lives. It can't be that."

"I say it is," returned the father vehemently. "It's only of late that he has shown his enmity, but I felt it for years, yet I've never lifted a finger against him, never laid a straw in his path."

Peter Mulvey coughed violently. "Well, you'll have to do it now, Meyer," he proclaimed. "But instead of straws use telephone poles. Come, gentlemen, let's sit down and reason together. There's more than one way to skin a rabbit if you set your mind to it."

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"Well, what do you propose?" asked Nathan after a moment's silence.

The Honorable Peter was prompt with his reply.

"We must get George Clarke to muzzle Gray. George owes his job as city attorney to me. He wants to go to the legislature and can't get the nomination without my endorsement. Now the major was mayor ten years ago, and if George is on to his job *right*, he can dig up something from the old rooster's record that will put a crimp in his scheme."

"By all means!" cried Max, scornfully. "Let us turn ghouls and dig up the dead past."

The politician waved his hand tolerantly and went on:

"Of course, George may buck up a little," he added with a side glance at Max. "But he's got to choose between his ambition and his mush, and I'm going to tell him that straight."

"If he's half a man he'll not hesitate," cried Max warmly.

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"I don't think he will. George never forgets number one."

"This is all nonsense, Mulvey," cried Nathan. "You can't get anything on Gray. His record is clean; I've watched him."

The Honorable Peter shrugged his immense shoulders; then stuck his tongue against one of his ponderous cheeks.

"Ah, have you so?" he said sententiously. "Then you've had one eye closed, Nathan. Let me tell you something. See this little spot here?" He walked over to a framed map of the city and tapped with his pencil at a certain intersection of lines. "Well, the city wants a site for the new workhouse and this represents a piece of land owned by Gray that right now he is trying to unload on the taxpayers at twice its value."

Max Meyer continued his restless pacing up and down the room. The father rested his chin in his palm and thoughtfully twirled his grayish mustache.

"You're sure of this?" he asked Mulvey with great deliberation.

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The politician smiled expansively. "Say, it's my business to know things," he returned. "The bill for the appropriation would have been sprung in the council a month ago but there was a cog loose somewhere. That's fixed now and the new gang, to a man, will vote for it. The major has got to get some pay, hasn't he, for putting us Democrats in the 'bread line'?"

The elder Meyer's brown study was still unbroken and so the Honorable Peter proceeded.

"That would be one hole for George to put a peg in if they had not blocked it up themselves, but they've re-assessed the property so the thing will look all right, and when you read about it in the papers it'll seem as regular as church-going."

"I can't believe this of Major Gray," declared Max, stopping suddenly in front of the big politician and looking him in the eye. "You must be mistaken."

"Pinch me and see if I'm asleep," was all the answer Mulvey vouchsafed.

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The young man turned away with a frown.

" Mulvey," said his father slowly, " do you know the tract of land at the corner of Pine Street and Laurel Avenue?"

Peter walked again to the big map and after a moment's wandering with his pencil, placed its tip at last at the point designated.

" Sure," he said. " Here it is. It's a fine property."

" Well," said Nathan with deliberate emphasis, " I've made my money in this town and I owe it something. I shall feel honored if the city will accept a gift from me of the land in question. It's worth $15,000, and will be an excellent site for an almshouse." Then, half under his breath: " But there'll never be a Jew in it."

The honorable Peter Mulvey walked slowly to the banker's side, a grin illumining his face. He reached out his hand to the senior partner.

" Meyer, shake," he said. " No wonder you've succeeded. You play your cards as if they were marked. Well, youngster, what do you say to this?"

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"The intent of the gift is too plain for praise," returned the young man simply.

The father rose angrily, stifling a word of protest on his lips. Mulvey it was who assumed the role of the corrector of youth.

"Oh, come to, boy," quoth he impatiently. "We are on earth, not in heaven. . . . Ah," he broke off suddenly, glancing from the front window, "There goes the widow McBride chasing 'sassiety' news for *The Banner*. I'll call her in and we'll just put the pajamas on the major's little scheme and rock it to sleep."

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VIII

NO SOONER had the Honorable Peter left the room than Nathan resumed his work of signing letters at his desk. The son stood silent, gazing from a window at the multiple activities of the city street. There were they, father and son; the one intent solely upon the great game of financial power; the other, with poetic and impressionable mind, completely divorced from a single interest within this handsome room.

An observer would have said that the two men resembled each other, but he could have scarcely explained how. In some vague way, he might have realized that they were of the same stock. There were certain lines of alikeness in their faces, yet the spiritual element behind the eyes, the imprint of the soul upon each separate countenance were not the same. However, that they were both strong men in their respective ways, no one

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who saw them at this moment could possibly doubt.

The father was the first to speak. He pushed aside a pile of signed letters and turned to his son with more severity in his eyes than the boy had ever yet beheld from them.

"Now, sir," said the elder Meyer sternly, "perhaps you will explain your attitude. . . . You disapprove my gift to the city, I apprehend."

Max shook his head with a smile.

"Not the gift, father, but the motive."

"Ah, do you think I do not love my city?" cried Nathan impetuously. "Listen, then. I have lived here forty years. I have seen the place grow and flourish and rise in excellence. I love the very stones of the street, for, in my own small way, I have helped along this growth. I have given of my means to the city's charities, to its public institutions, to its business industries, and without hope of reward save that which my civic pride returned to me. And now that at one stroke I can aid the town I love, and checkmate

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a thief who would rob its treasury, *you* presume to censure me ! . . . . For such presumption, your reasons, sir, should be excellent."

" Father," exclaimed the young man reproachfully.

" I mean exactly what I say. . . . What *are* your reasons?"

" Forgive me, sir, but this plot to worst Major Gray is unworthy of you," replied the son gravely.

" What? You would have me abandon my plans because this man opposes not them, but me?"

Max did not flinch from the issue.

" It is not what the major does," he returned, " but what *you* do, father, that concerns me. I love you, and reverence you, but I would not be your son if I feared to tell you it is not by ' smashing ' men and trampling on their character that an honorable end is achieved."

Nathan Meyer leaped from his chair in a fury of blazing anger.

" God of Abraham," he shouted. " Are

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you a Daniel to sit in judgment on me, your father?"

"Sir," replied the son, "I—"

"Have you forgotten the command to 'Honor thy parents'?"

"Father, hear me. I—"

But there was no damming the torrent of words flowing from the lips of the senior.

"Have I brought you forth from my loins," he cried, "only to heap sorrow and disappointment on my head? Are you—my son—to cast reproach upon me, and go unpunished? But stay, perhaps I wrong you. Perhaps you do not clearly see the point at issue. I tell you again this man Gray is my enemy. If his opposition were from business motives only, I would care nothing—I would laugh at it, for I should triumph in the end. But he opposes me on personal grounds—because I am a Jew! Shall I let this pass?"

"Oh, it cannot be that!" came the protest. "It is monstrous to believe it. Why, we are living in an age of enlightenment, of tolerance, of understanding. Men take one another

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at their worth as men, not at the estimate of long-buried hates and passions !"

" Oh, you think so?" scoffed Nathan. " Well, wait and see. In the meantime I shall prosecute my plans as I have laid them down."

The son drew close to his father and laid a hand affectionately upon his arm.

" Father," he said quietly, " we are of a patient race. Wait—wait until you can get this franchise freely and fairly and it will profit you. But to crush an enemy, bring disgrace upon him simply because he opposes you, whatever the motive, is a deed unworthy of a gentleman—and my father."

The voices of Peter Mulvey and Mrs. McBride were heard in active chatter outside the door.

Nathan Meyer stared at Max for a moment with dull, almost uncomprehending eyes. Then he slowly uplifted his hands.

" And this—this is my business partner," he groaned heavily.

" Here she is, Meyer," roared the Honorable

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Peter as he ushered Mrs. McBride into the office. " Here she is. I've told her the news. Now you confirm it. She's to have it exclusively, you understand."

" It's all in your hands, Mulvey," returned the banker gruffly.

Clarissa, in no way abashed by the lack of enthusiasm attending her reception, approached Meyer and shook him warmly by the hand.

" You've done a fine thing, Mr. Meyer, and I'll make a good story of it. This town needs a few more patriotic men like yourself. Max, I congratulate you on your father; I know you're proud of him."

" I am very fond of him," returned the son quietly.

Nathan wheeled sharply around on his swivel chair and gazed at his son as if studying some new sort of being. Then he arose and left the room.

With her best manner, the manner that had obtained her the entrée into the " upper circles " of the town, the lady addressed

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herself to the younger member of the great firm.

" Now tell me where you've been keeping yourself since you came home. I've wanted to interview you and you've dodged me as if I were a pestilence. A nice way to treat an old friend. Why, even Jacob here," and she indicated with her plump forefinger the presence of old Strauss, who had just entered the room, " even Jacob wouldn't do that."

" I'm afraid you can't make a story out of *me*, Mrs. McBride," said Max with a smile.

" No?" she smiled back. " Let's see. You were in Paris some time?"

" Two years."

" Well, did you meet Morris Maxfield, the writer? He lives there, I understand.

" I know him," returned Max curtly.

" You do?" cried Clarissa in an apparent ecstasy. " How wonderful! In twelve months he has become the best known short story writer of the day. Everybody is talking about him. Tell me, is Maxfield his real name?"

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" A pen name, I believe," replied the other. Then, as if weary of the subject: " I'm awfully glad to see you again. Good-bye."

But the fair Clarissa was not a " reporteress " for nothing.

" Wait, oh, wait," she pleaded. " Mr. Strauss, don't let him go. He knows Maxfield, the famous writer, and it would make such a story for my Sunday literary column." She accompanied her words by action and seized the junior partner by his coat sleeve.

Jacob smiled grimly at the performance. " He's a short story writer himself," said the old man.

The Honorable Peter Mulvey, although he felt a dim inner consciousness that it was scarcely the proper thing, could not refrain from laughing.

" Jealous of the other fellow, eh? That's why he won't talk."

" What? You a writer?" exclaimed Mrs. McBride with something of incredulity in her voice.

Max Meyer smiled. " Any one would think

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you'd discovered a prodigy," he said. "Is it so wonderful—to scribble a little? Why, you do it yourself, Mrs. McBride."

The old retainer caught up the word with alacrity. "That's just it—scribbling, scribbling," he cried contemptuously. "The other day I stumbled on some of his writing among some of my papers. I didn't read it. My time is too valuable, but it was called 'The End of the Road,' and was crossed out and scratched up as if he'd had hard work choosing words." The old man laughed ironically. "Perhaps he'll improve with practice."

"Max, do let me read it," cried Mrs. McBride.

Again the young man smiled. "Some day, soon, you can read it. And then perhaps you will tell us how it compares with the work of Morris Maxfield."

"Well, he's certainly modest," observed Clarissa to the Honorable Mr. Mulvey, after Max had left the room.

"Modest?" cried Peter. "Why, he's got modesty tied with a diamond hitch. . . . . .

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But say, Jake, have you given Mrs. McBride, here, all the points about that great scoop of hers?"

Jacob nodded slightly. "I believe she knows all that is necessary concerning Mr. Meyer's proposed gift of land."

"Oh, yes, I think I have all the information I need," said Clarissa, pursing her lips meditatively. "Just a moment, please, while I make a note or two. May I sit here at Mr. Meyer's desk? Thank you. Now, just where is the property?"

"This," said Strauss, handing her a slip of paper, "will give you frontage, depth, cost, taxes—everything. You can take it with you."

As the lady busied herself gathering her notes together the Honorable Peter addresed Jacob exultingly but in a low tone:

"This blocks the major's steal, Jake, but it will only make him fight the harder. Have you thought of that?"

The old man nodded and his keen eyes glittered as if with anticipation of his prey.

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"I will tell you something, Mulvey," he whispered. "I happen to know that Gray is sorely in need of funds. This move will be a hard blow to him. If it doesn't fell him in ruins, however, I have a greater weapon in my armory that will. . . . . Sh!" he added as Mrs. McBride arose and shook her garments preparatory to leaving the office.

"There," she beamed, "there, the story will appear on the first page to-morrow. I'll work it up all right. Now, Mr. Strauss, I want you to do something for me.

"Well?" interrogated Jacob with no sign of excitement.

"Send me that story: 'The End of the Road.' Max needn't know, and if it's good we may offer to publish it. Now, please do."

The old man burst out laughing. "I'll do it," he said. "Publish it anyway. If it's bad, as it must be, it may open the boy's eyes and turn his attention to work here."

"Oh! we couldn't publish it without his consent," replied Clarissa. "But send the story, will you?"

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" Didn't I say I would?" returned Strauss gruffly, making a great show of sitting down at his desk.

" Good day."

" See you to-morrow, Jake," bellowed the Honorable Peter, and then in a voice meant to be modulated to honeyed sweetness, he addressed the fair Mrs. McBride. " Come, you captivating news chaser, and I'll escort you to the office."

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IX

THE janitor of the Meyer & Son building observed Jacob Strauss earlier at his desk the next morning than ever before in his knowledge. So early was it, in fact, that a telegram brought in by a yawning messenger boy bore on its envelope the cheerful intelligence, " Night rates—collect."

Jacob's faculties were perhaps even more alert this morning than on others, a fact not reckoned on by the messenger boy, who attempted to deduct for his own use a few of the pennies from the change he finally managed to hand back.

" Ah, these Gentiles," fumed the old man. " Even their children are taught to steal."

Jacob chuckled audibly during his reading of the telegram.

" As I thought," he said to himself. " It's straight enough now," and he proceeded to his desk and took out a letter, together with the

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small bit of paper that had been the recent object of his patient examination. Again he had recourse to his magnifying glass and again peered through its bulging surface, as if by some enchantment he might gaze into the realms of the unknown.

This work done, he carefully put the papers back in his drawer and locked them fast. Then he ordered a long-distance call for New York, asking for the office of Abrams & Company.

A little later he smiled grimly as he received from far over the hills and valleys of the intervening States words that, to him, meant triumph and revenge.

He had barely placed the receiver back upon the hook when his chief arrived. He wasted few words of greeting, but unlocked the drawer of his desk and took forth the letter and his cherished slip of paper. Crossing the room noiselessly to where Nathan Meyer had already seated himself, he rested one hand on the back of his chair:

" Nathan," he said softly.

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His chief, startled, wheeled about and looked the old man inquiringly in the face. He knew the light he saw there. Long experience had taught him to read on that spare countenance the signs of good or ill import to the house. So he realized now that no common news was to be forthcoming.

" Oh, it's you, is it, Jake?"

The old man straightened himself to his full height, and grasped one of Meyer's arms with both his long, thin hands. His words came in the ancient scriptural form that in moments of stress colored his utterance.

" Nathan, the Lord hath delivered the enemy into thy hands."

" Yes, Jacob?" queried Meyer, apparently wholly unmoved. " What enemy? How?"

" Russell Gray; his son Paul has forged the endorsement to this note. See."

The banker took the paper and scrutinized it carefully.

" I have examined it under the glass," continued Strauss. " The name was traced with carbon paper, then written over with

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ink and the tracing rubbed out." He paused as if to note the effect of his disclosure.

"Go on, Jake." There was no trace of excitement in his voice.

"Let me read the letter that brought that slip of paper into our hands," cried the old retainer. "Listen."

"New York, September 27.

"Nathan Meyer, Esq.,

"Dear Sir: I enclose a sixty-day note for five hundred dollars, drawn by Paul Gray, a junior at Columbia College, and purporting to be endorsed by Russell Gray, his father. I discounted this note, though at the time I had my doubts of the endorsement; but having formerly lived in your city, and knowing Major Gray's standing, I felt he could not afford to let the note go to protest.

"As this paper matures on the 15th instant, I send it to you for collection, and put you in possession of the above facts that you may govern yourself accordingly.

"Yours truly,

Moss Abrams."

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The banker sat with expressionless face, gazing at the bit of paper in his hand and giving no evidence that he even heard what Strauss was reading.

The latter paused for a moment, scrutinizing his chief's countenance intently. "There's a postscript," he went on. "'I hear Major Gray is opposing the franchise for your telephone company.'"

He handed Nathan the letter and stood at attention, rubbing his hands.

For a full minute the banker studied both letter and paper. "How do you know that this is true?" he asked finally.

"I was prepared for that. I sent to New York to see. My messenger wired me last night, and I've talked with him over the long-distance this morning."

Without further words Meyer touched a button and presently a clerk appeared in the door.

"Find Mr. Peter Mulvey by 'phone or messenger," he ordered with incisive rapidity. "Say to him I wish to see him at once."

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He placed the pieces of paper on the desk beneath his eyes and gazed at them thoughtfully, caressing his beard the while. Then he tapped the letter with his finger. " Jake," he said with great earnestness, " this is worth something—just now."

" Good morning, father," came a cheery voice from the doorway.

Strauss regarded Max rather curiously, then walked away wagging his head dubiously.

" I missed you at breakfast," continued the young man, " and I dropped in to ask if you had reconsidered that matter of the gift of land. Sleep, you know, is a good counsellor," he added.

The father made no reply. Instead, he held up a shapely finger and beckoned the son to his side, placing the Abrams letter in his hands in silence.

Max slowly read the missive. " Well?" he said when he had finished. " Is this true? You have investigated?"

The father nodded.

The junior partner laid the letter on his

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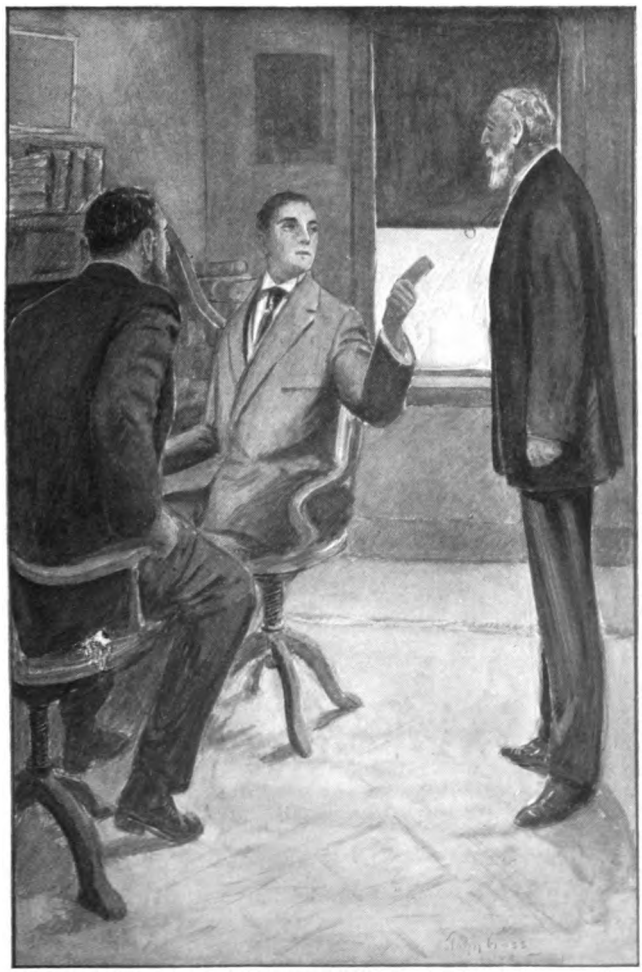

" Strauss," he commanded. "Send this to Abrams with a letter that the note has been paid."

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father's desk. " What are you going to do?"

" What would you advise?" asked the banker.

" Let me see the note."

The elder Meyer silently handed the incriminating paper to his son, who glanced at it, then walked swiftly to his own desk and threw up the top.

" At last !" thought Strauss triumphantly. " At last ! He recognizes business."

" The firm's checkbook, Mr. Strauss," said Max brusquely.

The old man moved slowly, as if in great perplexity, took from its desk the desired article and brought it to the junior partner, who filled out one of the blank sheets and tore it off.

" Mr. Strauss," he commanded. " Send this to Abrams with a letter that the note has been paid."

The old man trembled, but grasped the check in tremulous fingers and made as if to move to the outer office.

" Stop," thundered Nathan Meyer, leaping

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from his chair. " You're abusing your rights, sir," he shouted. " We don't buy spurious paper with my good money."

Son faced father calmly. " Have you read the postscript to Abrams' letter, sir? Don't you think he counts on our buying the note and using it to break Major Gray's heart?"

Comprehension illumined Jacob's face. " Of course, Nathan, the boy is right," he chuckled.

Father gazed searchingly at son for a moment, then he turned to Jacob. " Send the check," he said. " It's a small matter anyway."

As Jacob moved towards the door, Max laid a hand upon his arm.

" Mr. Strauss," he said, " understand, please, this transaction must lie only with us three."

" Of course, Max, of course," assented Jacob. " Naturally, naturally. . . . . The boy's not a fool, after all," he muttered as he went out.

Max Meyer picked up the promissory note, folded it, took out his card case and placed the paper inside.

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His father rose from his desk, walked to the door and faced his son, blocking his exit.

" What do you intend to do with that note —if I may take the liberty to ask?" he demanded.

" With your permission, father," returned the other with a smile, " I want to keep it from the knowledge of Major Gray and save a misguided boy from the consequences of his folly."

The father looked intently into eyes that met his steadily. His anger had vanished. There was nothing in his heart but a dull ache and a sense of being defrauded by nature.

" You are a puzzle to me, Max," he said. " Why do you wish to shield Paul Gray?"

" For common humanity's sake. Because I've known him from a baby. Because he is of my college. . . . . Father, were the case reversed, what would you have Paul do?"

The elder man frowned impatiently.

" I cannot conceive such a case," he returned. " You may have a lot of fool ideas in your head, Max, but you would never stoop

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to a dirty, petty crime. You would never dishonor your father."

"Thank you, sir," said the son simply. "And in the name of the trust you repose in me I ask you to spare this boy. I know your heart. I know you will give Paul a chance. It's his first mis-step. We'll try to make it the last. I'll talk with him."

Nathan Meyer placed himself at his great desk again and busied himself with his papers.

"Have your own way, Max," he said after a pause. "After all, I'm not fighting the boy."

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X

MAX MEYER sat late that afternoon in his own particular room at the house of his father, a room half den and half library, where the varied interests of his heart and mind were rather strangely illustrated. There were rare editions and duelling foils in close companionship; weird pipes and dainty brochures in one unconventional heap on the broad center-table.

Over his small desk was hung a picture of a famous and beautiful Parisian actress, while on the very shelf before him was the photograph of Doris Gray.

One or two heads of deer and bear adorned the walls, testifying to a wide range of feeling on the part of the apartment's occupant in which, however, the commercial never once appeared.

Max blew a dense cloud of smoke from a huge German pipe resting on the desk

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before him and poised the hand which was still grasping a pen over the paper upon which he had been writing. Little strips of manuscript that had been torn to bits as soon as finished testified that the younger partner of the house of Meyer & Son was finding the wooing of the muse a rather unproductive business. In fact, he could not write at all, for the face of the girl whom he had left only a few hours before, as well as that of her twin brother Paul, was constantly between his thoughts and his paper.

One thing was certain. He knew now what had caused the young fellow to act so strangely as to lead his sister to fear.

Ah, she had come to him! There was joy and exultation in the thought. She had chosen him as champion of her brother. And why? was it not that her heart's inclination led her footsteps to the one man she knew would not fail her? And yet, after all, was he not simply an old friend, a friend of childhood? And was it not the merest matter of course that she should come to him?

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Would she not have done the same to the Gray's family solicitor?

Then why had she not gone to Clarke, a lawyer of parts who had made a rapid rise in his profession and was as well an attractive and genial fellow?

Why? Why? Everything seemed to be a query to Max Meyer this afternoon. The eternal interrogation point forced itself against his every emotion.

Finally, with a great start of surprise at his own density, he wondered why he had not seen before that it was his duty to go to Paul and reassure him. But, on second thought, it would be merely making an unpleasant matter worse, he concluded. What was needed—and the recognition of this need gave him a little thrill of joy—was to see Doris and reassure her; to tell her in a most careful and guarded way without absolutely betraying the secret, that he knew what her brother's trouble was and that he would stand by him, come what might. The promise would be simple and easily kept, for was not the note

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paid and even at this moment securely hidden in his breast pocket, there to remain safe from all eyes whose seeing meant mischief?

He hurried out of doors, determined upon carrying forth the plan. As he walked along in varying moods, now hastening his step with eager anticipation, now delaying it as if in black doubt, of one thing he felt sure; before he had left America Doris Gray was his friend. That point at least was secure, but what sort of friend? A dear friend, he told himself. Granted that, how much more? Nothing had ever passed between them to indicate that friendship had, on her part, wearied of its longer name and sighed for a briefer, and now—it was more difficult than ever to see behind the maidenly screen that the girl had set before her emotions and to say whether or no there was waiting there any warmer welcome than that for a thousand other men of equal advantages.

As he went along, indulging in this half mournful, half pleasurable introspection, a voice with a sweet and familiar note hailed

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him. He looked up and saw the Gray's motor-car standing at the corner of the street. In the tonneau was Doris, and, in front, the chauffeur was busy over the wires.

" Can I be of any assistance?" asked Max after a bow and a smile to and from Miss Gray. " I have been mixed up with these contrivances more or less for two or three years."

He went to work with the chauffeur, who was rather an unpractised individual, and quickly found the cause of the trouble.

" Explain it, Max," said the young lady interestedly. "We might want to know what to do in other cases like this."

The young man assumed rather a professional air.

" Well, Doris," he said, " your magneto has broken down on account of a defect in the wiring, and your storage battery, on which you relied to fall back upon, has run out. That's the whole story of it. This double ignition system is all right unless it gets all wrong."

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" Well, sir," observed the chauffeur hopefully, " Mr. Clarke has gone down town to get some dry cells."

Max Meyer winced at the name. Why was this lawyer being perpetually thrown up in his face, not only by his own imaginings, but by actual events as soon as he had gotten out of doors? He suddenly remembered an engagement at the club and concluded that he would leave the stalled automobile and its fair freight to remain on their corner until the useful Mr. Clarke should return with the cells.

But all at once the sky brightened around him and the Clarke cloud vanished.

" I'm tired of waiting here," announced Doris, " and I think I will walk home. You may come along with me if you like, Max."

Max liked. There was no question about that, and as they walked slowly along their way towards the Gray mansion, uttering small nothings as they went, the young man blessed the Providence that watches over the disablement of motor-cars.

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Presently the Meyer house was passed and a wonderfully brilliant thought suggested itself to Max.

"Why not stop here?" he asked Doris. They could hear the automobile as it came along and signal it.

Doris agreed, after a moment's pretty hesitation, admitting that her throat was dry from the inhaling of much dust and that she would be glad of a glass of water. So the young man led her into the garden, at her own preference, and went to fetch her refreshment.

As Doris sat there wondering at the source of all the wealth that was so plainly in evidence, the man who had gathered together that wealth came through the garden on his way home. Nathan Meyer was courteous at all times.

"Good afternoon, Miss Gray," he said with a bow, and passed into the house.

The girl sat interlacing her fingers and looking across the lawn to the splendid stables beyond.

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" It used to be ' Doris,' " she thought to herself, gravely.

Just then Max returned with the water, and after drinking it the girl lapsed into silence, tapping the gravelled walk with her boot. Suddenly she spoke, rapidly and with incisive accent.

" Max, a shadow is creeping up between our families. What is it?"

The young man's face grew grave in an instant.

" Why, Doris, I—"

" You must not deny it," persisted the girl. " Your father just now—"

The young man looked at her with a sudden questioning in his gaze.

" Oh, it was nothing save an indefinable yet a not-to-be-mistaken manner. And why should it be? I have known you since I was so high, and Jane and I look on you almost as a brother."

" Doris, I—," began the young man, leaning towards her as if to take her by the arm.

The girl raised her hand.

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"Your father calls me 'Miss Gray,'" she interrupted. "My father calls you—oh, Max, what does it all mean?"

Here was an avenue of explanation. He knew that now was the moment to reveal so much as was possible of the growing enmity of the families. Better this than any doubt between himself and the girl. Better to let her see unclouded, the real reason than to permit any estrangement to grow up between themselves.

"Their business interests are opposed, Doris," he replied gravely. "That is the trouble, and it has brought about friction, but it will pass away. It must."

The girl shook her head with a doubting sadness.

"It's more than friction, Max," she said. "It is positive dislike." She rose and faced the young man and gazed straight into his eyes.

"Max," she cried, "is it possible that at this day of the world two men of intelligence can be at odds because of race and creed?"

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Max Meyer drew a long breath almost painful in its intensity. So here was the point and the girl knew it. Here was the same thought that had been spoken by his father only a little while ago. If Doris Gray could also give it utterance, she had heard it, necessarily, at home, and if both his father and her father had talked in this fashion the worst must be true.

" So that is the shadow between us?" said the young man slowly.

The girl's eyes glowed with sudden indignation.

" No, not between us, Max, not between you and me; between our families."

" Then it makes no difference with you that I am a Jew?"

" Max !" said the girl. It was but one word and yet there was in its tone all the reproach that years of intimacy and kindly regard could give it.

But the young man would put it to the complete test.

" So it makes no difference to you," he said,

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" that I would not be otherwise; that I am proud of it; that not even for you would I change the essentials of my faith?"

" If you would I should despise you," replied the girl with solemn emphasis. " Are you not the friend of my childhood? Do we not speak the same language? honor the same flag? love the same country? Shall a difference of creed breed ill between us? Why, Max !"

Max Meyer took the hand stretched towards him and held it for a moment in a warmer clasp than he had ever yet bestowed upon it.

" No, never," he cried. " Let us not discuss it."

It seemed that he would have preferred to discuss the hand, for he still retained it soft and warm in his fingers. A little wavering tint of pink swept over the girl's cheek as she withdrew her hand from its resting-place.

" I must discuss it," she replied. " Jane stands with me, but Paul is beginning to reflect my father's prejudice."

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" Paul, too," said the young man reproachfully.

" But," explained the girl eagerly, " he—he was not himself. Do not let what I have said keep you from remaining his friend."

" I will be what I would be were he *my* brother," said Max simply. " For your sake, Doris, I will—Doris," he cried, a great flood of emotion sweeping up from his heart and coloring his voice, " Doris, you *must* know that I—"

" There's the car," cried the girl as a familiar " honk " sounded only a little way down the street.

At that moment Max Meyer had a great and compelling anger against the whole tribe of self-propelled vehicles.

Matters were made no better when Doris, running towards the gate and looking down the street, cried:

" Ah, they're all there."

" All?" queried the young man.

" Why, yes," said the girl, her words coming more rapidly than seemed quite necessary.

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" Why, yes, Jane and—Mr. Clarke. Jane stopped down town to do some shopping and Mr. Clarke and I rode on."

" Oh," said the young man dubiously. He saw that the machine had stopped and that Clarke and the chauffeur had begun to occupy themselves about the hood of the engine.

" Yes, Mr. Clarke went back for Jane after the motor was coaxed into action," said the girl. " It's still going badly, I guess. We are going out on the lake to-night. Can we count on you? You and Jane in one canoe."

" And George Clarke and you in another?" asked Max dryly. Doris nodded.

" Ah, it *is* Clarke then?"

" You foolish boy," returned the girl shortly. " It's nobody. I simply like the company of men who do things, and you," with a little laugh not wholly free from scorn, " oh, Max, you've never done a thing in all your life except spend money !"

" You think so?" returned the young man gravely. " You may be mistaken."

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At this point came a diversion. The car had now reached the curb opposite the Meyer garden and from it floated a small feminine voice.

"Max, come and help me down."

The young lawyer sprang from the front of the machine and opened the door of the tonneau.

"No, I want Max, thank you," she insisted tartly, and Max went to her.

"Old friends have the first place, you know, Clarke," he observed with somewhat more significance than he himself perhaps realized.

"Yes, that's so," returned the lawyer amiably, "but not always the last." And he busied himself about the machine as Max held out his strong arms and lifted the fragile little figure of Jane Gray to the ground.

"Thank you, Max," smiled the girl. She came through the open gate into the garden and walked up the gravel path with her queer little twisted gait with its irregular rhythm. Max went by her side, an attentive cavalier.

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" No, I want Max, thank you," she insisted

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"You are going with us to-night?" she asked him wistfully.

"To be sure—in the canoe with you."

The little girl smiled happily, but almost incredulously.

"I thought perhaps you would rather—" she faltered.

"Go with Clarke, and leave you and Doris to go together? Nonsense, little girl, you're the best company a man could wish." And he laid his hand caressingly on her arm.

"That's good of you, Max, even though it isn't so," retorted Jane, once more alive to her own deficiencies.

Max Meyer saw his father come out of the house and he wondered at it. He wondered still more as the senior partner, after nodding to Clarke, came straight over to Jane and shook hands cordially with her, giving the little creature a kindly and courteous greeting.

But whatever of sympathetic feeling there might have been for one member of the Gray household was buried and covered over in an instant by the appearance of the major

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himself at the garden gate. He stood stiffly as if at attention and glared at Nathan Meyer for full thirty seconds.

"Pardon this intrusion," he said at last in a voice absolutely devoid of friendliness. "I saw my car at the door and wondered what possible business could bring a member of my family here."

Nathan Meyer drew himself up proudly in turn and little Jane at his side clenched her hands in anger and shame.

Doris glanced furtively at Max to see what his attitude was to be and to gather from it perhaps something of her own towards him. The young man stood the test admirably.

"Major Gray, I'm glad to see you, sir," he said, slowly approaching the father of Doris.

That angered old soldier paid no attention to his greeting.

"I am waiting for you, Doris—Jane," he cried and motioned to the car.

The older daughter hesitated, then threw her head proudly back, walked down the path

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a few steps and paused. Little Jane instinctively took Max's hand as if he were to lead her back as he had led her in.

" Max, remember we are friends, always," she whispered.

By this time Doris had gained her self-possession. " Try to forgive us all for this discourtesy," she said, turning towards the elder Meyer. Then after a bitter little laugh: " The sins of the father, you know, are visited upon the children. . . . If quite agreeable, father, I prefer to walk home."

" So do I," snapped Jane.

" Clarke, will you ride?" asked the major, in no way perturbed by this exhibition of filial disapproval.

" Thank you, I believe I will," returned the lawyer genially. " It's too bad, old man," he said to Max, as he turned away, " but I suppose we shan't see you to-night."

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XI

FOR a moment or two Max Meyer, leaning upon the iron railing of the fence before his father's garden, followed with rather wistful eyes the swiftly moving, garnet-colored car of the Grays until it disappeared. Then suddenly he looked about him to find that he was alone.

The image of his father's figure as he received with calm dignity the evidently studied insult of Major Gray was first in his mental vision. He must see Nathan Meyer at once. He must ascertain, if possible, to what extent the wretched discourtesy of Doris's father had sunk into his soul.

He must do—ah, he must do a thousand things, scarce one of which seemed practical or even reasonable. But that he must be with his father immediately was an absolute conviction.

As he walked slowly towards the library,

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where he believed he should find Nathan, there rolled through his mind a great wave of tempestuous thoughts. He even found himself attempting to excuse the brutality of the old soldier towards his father.

Something, perhaps, of which none of them was aware had colored and embittered the mind of Major Gray. Some contemptible tale-bearer might have travelled into the household of the Grays with his mean burden of innuendo and insinuation. So that, after all, a man of honor such as he still wished to believe Major Gray to be, might have, to him, valid reason for his hostility.

Then Doris. To what extent was she aware of the causes that swayed her father's mind? And how far could she believe the family of Meyer to be responsible for the cloud that had arisen between the two houses? And what of little Jane, with her keen, penetrating vision, her mental clairvoyancy that often reached conclusions found to be true by others less gifted, after long circuits of thought?

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And Clarke. Where was his place in this rapidly growing tragedy? So far as being part of the main drama, Max dismissed the lawyer at once and yet there he loomed in the wings, as it were, ready at anything that he might believe to be his cue to enter and play some highly important, perhaps highly threatening, role.

As he neared the library, Max heard voices raised in earnest discussion. He knew them for his father's and Jacob's, and yet, spite of what he realized was the importance of their interview, he felt that he could not, must not, wait an instant.

He knocked twice on the door. There was no reply. Nothing abashed, he opened it and entered the room. There he found Jacob Strauss standing over his father, who was seated at his desk. For once the older man seemed the ruler.

"Ha! he little knows that we have him here," cried Strauss, opening and shutting his claw-like hands with the regularity of some weird machine.

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The father made no reply, for at that moment he perceived Max.

" Jacob, I wish to be alone with my son," he said shortly.

" Oh, yes, Nathan, I'll go, I'll go," returned the old man, but before he had proceeded many feet he strode back to the banker and whispered hoarsely in his ear: " But we've got him here,"—again the writhing of the skinny hand—" here !"

Max Meyer thought he heard a sardonic chuckle as the old man glided from the room and silently shut the door.

Neither spoke for many seconds; Max because he instinctively wished his father to take the initiative, and the elder Meyer because he was revolving in his mind that which might be said with most force and least injustice. At last he spoke:

" So—you would shield Russell Gray from the knowledge that his son is a common thief. This man who has insulted me and you, and has used his children to do it."

He rose from his chair and paced nervously

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across from one book-lined wall to the other.

"Father, don't you understand?" said Max gently. "It is not what he does but what we do that counts."

The banker made a wry face; a face wherein disgust and pity were equally mingled. It was the grimace of a man of affairs discrediting and disapproving a system of ethics he had never learned to respect.

"Oh, your moralizing sickens me. My morals are practical, not theoretical. You can't run business on rose-water morality. . . There's something behind all this, Max. What is it? Why do you champion this man against me, your father?"

He came to his son and took a hand firmly in his own. Suddenly he recalled a hint old Strauss had let fall as a part of his campaign against the Grays. He drew back a little and looked searchingly into the dark eyes of his son.

"Max," he cried, hoarsely. "Is it the girl—Doris?"

Max Meyer was unperturbed, yet resolute.

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If the moment for the tearing of the scales from his own and his father's eyes was at hand, so let it be. No more harm could come than had already been inflicted.

" I take the stand I do, father," he said quietly, " because it is right. As for Doris—yes,—I love her. I've loved her since I've known the meaning of the word. "

At a moment's stroke all the self-possession of Nathan Meyer left him. He dropped limply into his chair and with a great cry buried his face in his hands, a strong man thrown off his guard, demoralized, crushed.

" My son, my only son," he moaned piteously.

Max came to him gently and with more tenderness than the father had known for many years, placed his hand on his shoulders.

" Father, is it a crime?" he asked appealingly.

Nathan Meyer recoiled from his son's touch. He lifted his head and there were now fire and passion in his face.

" Wait," he cried. " When your mother

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died you were a little boy. When you grew older you went to boarding school, then to college, then abroad. I've seen little of you, Max, but all these years I've lived alone in this big house, with only faithful Jacob Strauss for companion, waiting for the time when you would bring home to me a daughter. But not such a one as this—the child of my enemy, and a Gentile!"

"But I love her."

The answer was eloquent in its simplicity, but of no avail.

"Wait, I tell you!" thundered the father. "I have worked for you. I have planned for you. I have made you my partner. And how have you repaid me? By an utter lack of interest in my business, by opposition to me at every point, and now—by this worst blow of all!"

"Father," was the deliberate reply, "if I've disappointed you I am sorry indeed. But I have no interest in business. I cannot be ground down in the mortar of commerce. By nature we Jews are poets, artists, philos-

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ophers. Centuries of oppression have made us simply 'merchants.' I revolt at this; I must strive for something better."

"Bah!" growled Nathan. It seemed his best reply to this childish folly.

"I am what I am," pursued the son with irritating calmness, "and that is not a trader, a barterer, a mere wealth-getter. Some day you may be proud of me, father—though not as a changer of money."

"Nonsense! . . . But that is not the question now; it is this Christian, this child of my enemy that you love. Are there not enough women of your own religion that you choose this one girl out of all the world?"

Max Meyer needed not the warmth of love in his heart to impel him to the defence of Doris Gray. The stir of chivalry would have done as much, but chivalry and love combined made of him an impassioned pleader.

"Is she not a good woman?" he cried—"honest, sweet, pure? Would she not make you a good daughter—faithful, loving? Is my heart to be bound by a creed, father?

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Are we Jews to live apart from our fellowmen forever? Are we not children of one great Creator, who judges us not by the forms and ceremonies we follow, but by the good or evil we do, as the spirit within us prompts? After all, is not love undefiled—no matter how expressed, the only religion worth while?"

The banker stirred impatiently in his chair. "I shall not argue with you," he returned. Then his voice took on a newer, and, to the son, a grievous note of scorn. "Have you no pride, man, no gratitude?" he asked. "You have lived upon my bounty for twenty-six years—lived like a gentleman, while I have worked for you. Does not my wish in this matter sway you at all?"

An infinite sadness settled upon the young man's grave face. And these were words of a father! All his life he had believed that naught but sympathy and kindly affection were due or could come from one to the other. Still retaining that wonderful Hebraic love of family, he could scarcely credit his own ears. And yet it was all too evident.

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"Your words sway me, sir, if not your wish," he said. "I had thought all this time I was debtor to your love, not to your charity. I had thought—" His even voice broke ever so slightly, but in a moment its calmness had returned. "Present the bill, father, your bounty has run up against me and I will pay it little by little, to the last penny, and that I may not be a tax upon you longer I resign my partnership in your house and will go my own way henceforth."

Nathan Meyer regarded his son in silence. It needed many seconds for the conviction to penetrate his brain that this son was to tear apart the bonds that had made them comrades for years. He saw Max take up his hat and prepare to quit that room, and the light of comprehension broke in upon him. He arose and with unsteady footsteps followed the young man to the door.

"Max," the father cried tremulously. The younger Meyer paused. "Not in this way, Max. Do not let us part like this."

The son hesitated again, turned and met

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his father with outstretched arms. Tears stood in the eyes of the older man and his voice choked within him.

"Oh, my son, my son, I cannot give you up!"

It was the utterance of a great soul conquered by love. Then and there the two men knew that henceforth no bar could arise between them. Max Meyer grasped Nathan's arms in an embrace that had not had its like since childhood.

"My father!" he cried, deep and tender emotion rising to his lips.

"I am alone in the world, Max, and I am growing old," said the father mournfully. "What have I to live for but your happiness? I cannot desert the way of my fathers, but you—you, Max—marry Doris if you must, and —God bless you."

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XII

THE GRAY automobile, whose obstinate misbehavior had been the cause of so much bitterness, drew up before the steps leading to the veranda of the major's house. The old soldier, full of offended dignity, dismounted without a word and disappeared into the house. Clarke had not come with the rest, but had been dropped further down town.

But if the major was derelict in his duty towards his crippled child, there was at least one helping hand to meet her. No sooner had the crunching of the wheels upon the gravelled drive told of the return of the party than Ellen Carter ran down from the broad piazza and clasping her cherished Jane in her arms lifted her tenderly to the ground.

They found Paul with a copy of *The Banner* in his hand stretched out in a steamer chair on the veranda, pipe in mouth and the customary sourness on his face.

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" What's kept you so long?" he growled to Doris as Ellen and little Jane moved into a far corner to chat over the events of the day.

Doris flushed a little with fast-growing indignation at the boy's currishness.

" Well," she returned as amiably as she could, " the car acted badly and we stopped at the Meyers' place for a time."

There suddenly swept over her face a great wave of intense earnestness as she half whispered:

" Paul, dear, Max has promised—"

" I don't want to hear about that," interrupted the brother, scowling and banging his pet meerschaum on the chair-arm in the effort to clear it of ashes.

His sister seated herself so that she might look directly into his eyes.

" Paul, listen ! " she said severely.

" I've heard enough already to sicken me," returned the boy. " Now, what's all this nonsense I hear whispered around town about you and Max Meyer? They even have

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the impudence to say that he's in love with you."

This was not lost upon Ellen Carter, for indeed it was shouted rather than spoken. That fearless censor of the Gray morals was not disposed to allow this callow youngster to insult her friends or his sister.

" For shame, Paul !" she called out.

Doris, for her part, looked more amused than anything else.

" I should say it *was* a shame," exclaimed Paul, " if Doris tolerates the fellow."

The girl rose and toyed with some flowers that were part of the adornment of a little wicker stand near her chair. She was still smiling, though a reader of the emotions would scarcely have said that the smile was wholly one of pleasure. If her attitude was studied, however, it was effective.

" Paul," she said almost sweetly, " you are both rude and impertinent."

" Oh, I see," sneered the brother. " You are pleased that this Jew cad admires you."

Here another champion of the Meyers made

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herself felt. Jane rose as abruptly from her chair as she was able, and came with her pathetic little limp as fast as she could until she stood under her towering brother, her mouth twitching and her eyes blazing with anger.

" You big—big brute," she screamed.

Paul looked down upon the small fury with cool contempt.

" As I have said before, Janie, I hate Jews and so does the governor. . . . Here's the latest from the camp of Meyer & Son. I'll read the head-lines:

" ' Gift to City . . . Nathan Meyer, the well-known banker, presents magnificent site for new workhouse. . . . City will not have to purchase land—' "

" Let me see that paper," was the imperious command that startled the son from his reading.

Major Gray had come from the French window unperceived and snatched the offending sheet from Paul's hands and devoured the story with his eyes.

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"The damned, scheming scoundrel," he shouted, crunching the newspaper in his fists and tossing it over the veranda rail. "He opposes me at every step."

He turned with sudden fury to his two daughters. "You're not to have anything more to do with these Meyers, father or son. Understand me? You're not to speak to them or even notice them. They're a pair of rogues."

It was Jane who returned the challenge.

"*I* shall speak to them," she declared shrilly. "They're not rogues and you've no right to say it."

The major, trembling with anger, stepped close to the little girl, his cane upraised in his clenched fist. Doris dropped her flowers and Ellen Carter clasped her hands in apprehension. The brother looked on with sullen contempt.

"So you would disobey me, would you?" the major demanded of his rebellious younger daughter. He had adopted his best military tone, although, truth to tell, the genuineness

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of his anger would have given him sufficient severity.

But being the daughter that most resembled him, little Jane was just as defiant.

" Yes, when your commands are unjust," she returned.

The major purpled with fury. " By God, this is too much," he cried, raising his cane and poising it a moment over the head of his latest born.

The girl stood firm, but with a cry of anger Ellen Carter sprang before the infuriated man and thrust Jane back to her sister and out of the path of the upraised stick.

Doris threw out her arms,

" Father, are you mad?" she cried.

At the sound of her voice the major slowly lowered his hand, but he was not yet through with the disciplining that he so thoroughly deserved.

" Russell Gray!" exclaimed Ellen Carter. " I did not think you were a coward. Oh, you flinch, but I'm not afraid to tell you the truth. I came here when your children were

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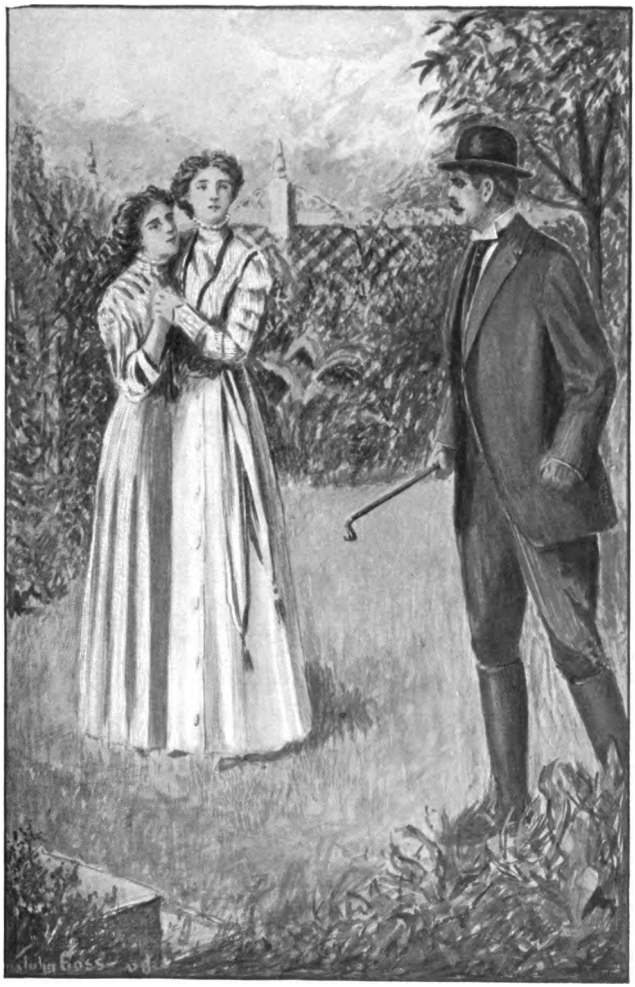

" Father, are you mad?" she cried

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babies, and I've brought them up as best I could. You have paid me for it—that's true. But you could not pay me for the love I've lavished on them, or the care I've given them. I claim the right of the mother who died in giving birth to Jane to protect and cherish her, and I'll do it to my last breath! . . . Your manhood demands of you an apology to this poor little child whom you have threatened and insulted before us all!"

The major threw his stick to the veranda floor and looked shamefacedly from one to the other of the spectators of his unreasoning wrath, which had fled away from him as suddenly as it had been inflamed.

"You're right," he said gravely. "Jane, I forgot myself. I ask your pardon—and yours, Ellen." He removed his hat and stood before his daughters and their older friend, the picture of humiliation and self-contempt.

Little Jane sprang towards him impulsively.

"Father, father, I ask your forgiveness, too," she said.

The major placed his hand on her head,

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then, without a word, turned on his heel and walked stiffly into the house.

The girl, all her bravery fled away, burst into tears, and Ellen Carter put her arm around the little waist and led her into the house.

Paul Gray, his handsome face still distorted by his now habitual scowl, paced up and down the veranda, his hands in his pockets jingling his keys. He walked with a swagger that somehow grated on his sister's sensibilities almost as much as did the evil expression on his countenance.

When he at last found tongue it was to continue his insulting tactics.

" A nice family row over a couple of upstart Jews," he sneered.

Doris flamed into resentment, yet she spoke calmly enough.

" Paul, if you and I remain friends you must choose your words better about *my* friends," she said.

" Oh, if you're so sensitive I'll shut up," returned the brother roughly. " But before

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I do let me caution you to go slow about young Meyer. You'll find you are mistaken in him. He's no saint. He's lived in Paris—" this with a wonderful air of worldly wisdom—" and any fool knows what that means."

" Not being a fool, I don't understand you," returned his sister coldly.

At that moment George Clarke came down the gravel path from the gate. As he climbed the veranda with the easy familiarity of close acquaintance, he laughingly apologized for his visit, declaring that he had left one of his law books in the automobile.

It was not necessary to attempt to sift fact from fiction in this declaration, but it was evident enough that the young lawyer was not displeased at even the semblance of an errand to bring him back to Doris. He, too, had in his hand a copy of *The Banner* and its staring head-lines over the news that had interested them all most keenly were just above the fingers that grasped the paper.

" I see your friends have made quite a stir to-day—" he remarked to Doris, taking a

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seat beside her and holding up *The Banner* for her examination.

She smiled complacently.

" You mean Mr. Meyer's gift to the city?"

" Yes, the whole town is singing his praises."

" I haven't heard the chorus up this way," sneered Paul.

" Well, at any rate," continued the lawyer, " they are talking of running Nathan Meyer for mayor, next election."

" Umph !" snorted the young fellow.

" He would fill the office well, would he not?" asked Doris innocently.

The lawyer cleared his throat judicially and gazed afar off to where the descending sun was painting, with a still richer glory than frost had given to them, the now crimsoned trees of autumn. He wondered how much there was in the girl's question; to what extent her outspoken respect for Nathan Meyer reflected on the emotion called forth by the son.

" Oh, to be sure," he replied after a pause. " The question is whether we want a—er—"

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"A Jew," suggested Doris calmly. "Say it, Mr. Clarke. The word is not different from German or Spaniard or any other describing a race, is it?"

"Oh, certainly not, certainly not," hastily agreed the lawyer, shooting a swift glance at her pure profile as it was cut out between himself and the reddening sky. "Certainly not, only I wasn't going to use that word. The question is whether we exactly want a—er—man who has so many interests, at the head of our city government."

"Oh!" returned the girl, dryly.

Here her brother, who had keenness enough to see which way the wind was veering, presented his opinion as a sort of antidote for the family tendency.

"Of course we don't want a Jew for mayor," he declared almost fiercely. "The Meyers are trying to run the town now and some one ought to put a blister on them."

The lawyer laughed appreciatively. "Oh, nothing so painful as that, I hope," he said.

Doris Gray's disgust at the turn of the talk

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was apparent enough. She assumed what Paul had in younger and better days been pleased to call her " princess air."

" I must take these flowers in," she said. " They are for the table."

Then she was gone, to the disappointment of Clarke, whose eyes had followed her retreating form with avidity.

The boy whistled softly and began to fill his pipe.

" Well," he observed, " the Jews appear to be the chosen people, indeed, to-day."

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XIII

EORGE CLARKE stood gazing into the French window where Doris had disappeared as if, by so doing, he might perchance re-embody her as a part of the twilight picture. Meditatively he chewed a big, unlighted cigar that he had just pulled from his pocket. There was silence between the two men for a time, broken finally by the younger.

"Clarke," he said, and there was in the word something that seemed more than the mere turning of a name.

"Well?" said the lawyer.

"Never mind, old boy, she's gone but I'm here," observed the youth sagely. "And a present good is better than a fleeting joy. Come on, let's get out of this."

Clarke laughed rather mirthlessly. Something had irritated his sensibilities, and he was in no mood to banter with this fledgeling, friendly though he was to him in general.

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"If you call yourself 'good,'" he returned with an odd smile, "you haven't sized up your reputation, my boy."

"What's the matter with my reputation?" demanded Paul sharply, casting a startled glance at the young lawyer.

The other replied with perfect coolness.

"Oh, there are some stories afloat about you. Men of the same college have a way of keeping tabs on one another—even when widely separated," he added with peculiar emphasis.

"You mean Max Meyer has been spying on me?" was the savage question.

"Hold your horses, Paul, I haven't mentioned names," said the lawyer.

"You don't have to, damn him. But what's he been saying?"

"Now, see here, Gray," observed Clarke between vicious assaults on the unlighted cigar, "you will kindly remember that I didn't mention that he had been saying anything."

"But I know he has," was the sulky

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response. "He's just come through New York and he heard something and has tipped Doris off."

"Oh, then, there *is* something?" remarked the lawyer with his inscrutable smile.

"I don't—well, there is," said Paul with a rather silly smile. "Boys will be boys, they say, you know."

"And fools, too," muttered Clarke under his breath. For a moment he said nothing aloud, then suddenly took the youth by the arm.

"Paul," he declared earnestly, "it will pay you to keep me on your side. You may need me."

The other looked rather unenlightened.

"Oh, we're good friends sure enough, aren't we?"

Several nods, slowly made as if with judicial deliberation, were the first reply from the attorney. Then he said with more earnestness than Paul could remember from him:

"I'll be a good friend to you if you'll be

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one to me—in there," he added, pointing a thumb to the French window.

Paul was in no way surprised, for though often foolish he was not a fool. He had performed that simple process, as yet not improved upon by all the abstruse philosophy and higher mathematics of the colleges—that process of putting two and two together. He knew the desire of Clark's heart and he realized all at once that he might play upon that desire with advantage to himself.

"You mean with Doris, of course," he said. Clark nodded again. "What can a fellow do with a fellow's sister? You see she has her own ideas. . . . I'll tell you, old chap, what to do. Get in right with the governor on this franchise bill."

"I'm right on it now. The thing's dead, anyway."

"I'm not so sure about that," replied the boy knowingly. "The governor's heard rumors of forcing it over the veto. Now if you could—"

The lawyer rubbed his chin thoughtfully

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and finally lighted the cigar with which he had made such havoc.

"If that should happen," he began,—"Oh, but it's most improbable. As for your father helping me in there"—with another jerk of the thumb toward the interior of the house—"he couldn't if he would. But Doris would do almost anything for you," he insinuated. The boy laughed carelessly.

"Do you think so?" he said. "Well, I'm afraid she'd balk a bit if I tried to drive her in a double hitch."

"Perhaps," observed the lawyer, with a savage outblast of smoke from his mouth. "Perhaps if I told her Polly Bigelow—"

"Polly Bigelow?" cried the boy, startled out of his semi-humorous attitude, "What the—"

"You knew she was coming to town, of course?" remarked Clarke calmly.

"Coming here?"

"Yep, to the Hotel Jarvis."

"So she's taken you into her confidence?" sneered the younger man.

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"Oh, not at all, not at all," replied Clarke in his most matter-of-fact tone. "The Columbia course in logic evidently makes you over quick to jump at conclusions. I only know—well, I know enough to feel sure that you would not be glad to see her."

"I won't see her," growled the boy, snapping his cigarette case with a vicious click.

"She, not you, will decide that, or I'm much mistaken in the young lady," returned Clarke placidly.

Paul paced nervously up and down the veranda and finally threw away his cigarette as if it were nauseating. The lawyer observed him narrowly and then and there formulated his own plan of campaign.

"Now keep cool on this thing," he said reassuringly. "Perhaps I can help you—if you'll help me. Come! Is it a bargain?"

He held out his hand. The boy hesitated for a moment; then met it with his own in a rather half-hearted way.

Had the Honorable Peter Mulvey been five seconds earlier in ambling down the gravelled

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walk and climbing the steps of the veranda he might have witnessed this compact, and, with his usual cleverness, have deducted something therefrom. As it was, he merely found one young man lighting a fresh cigarette and another toiling at a cigar which refused to draw.

"Hello, Clarke," cried the politician jovially. "Came to call on the major, but glad to see you. I was going to look you up down town to-night. Can I have your ear a minute? You'll excuse us, Paul, won't you?" he added. "Politics won't interest you."

"Now, what the devil do you want?" half whispered Clarke, after young Gray had condescendingly retired to a far end of the veranda.

"Don't you get sassy, sonny," said Peter with his expansive grin. "Sit down. I will ease your nerves."

The lawyer obeyed mechanically, but could not help remarking: "You grow wearisome at times, Pete."

"All good things grow wearisome," re-

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turned the Honorable Peter philosophically. "It's only the bad that keep us amused." He smoked a moment in silent enjoyment of his epigram, then:

"George, you've got to fish or cut bait—and do it right now."

"Don't speak in riddles," returned the lawyer tartly. "You have something you want me to do. What is it?"

The politician put his broad, fat hand on the arm of Clarke's chair, then, in a voice prudently lowered, he returned:

"I'll tell you in my own little way. . . . If you want to go to the Legislature, my boy, you've got to get the endorsement of one Peter Mulvey. You understand?"

"Of course, of course."

"But if you are thinking of changing your coat, George, I warn you that it will be a misfit."

Even in the gathering gloom Mr. Mulvey noted a slight movement as of apprehension on the part of Clarke.

"Oh, talk sense, Peter," said the lawyer.

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"I am. You can't strengthen yourself, politically, by an alliance with Gray. You might get a social position but you won't get money or influence. This is a Democratic stronghold, my boy, and reformers are like butterflies—creatures of a day. As for money—Gray's hard up."

"I see what you are driving at," said the lawyer after a moment's cogitation. "You want me to keep out of young Meyer's way."

The honorable Peter laughed in his most indulgent fashion, which was very indulgent indeed when he chose.

"I'm no man's nurse," he said. "All is fair in politics, but when it comes to making a football of a girl's heart—I'm not in the game."

His voice in an instant took on a totally different significance.

"I'm talking business with you," he continued earnestly. "We'll pass the franchise bill next week but Jones will veto it, as sure as hell. We can't pass it over his veto, so there's but one thing left to do—make Gray call off his dog."

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" H'm," responded the lawyer, in deep thought.

" Now, I've chosen you to turn the trick, George," attempted the Honorable Peter. " If you do it I'll send you up to the Legislature, and, yes, by the Lord, I'll put you on the road to Congress. Now choose between your ambition and your mush. It's up to you."

The lawyer rose and came as near to Mulvey's face as that gentleman's huge rotundity would permit.

" How can I do it? " he asked, looking the politician straight in the eye.

" I've got a way," said Mr. Mulvey almost inaudibly. " It's not exactly square and it's got to be kept dark, but the end justifies the means in politics—"

He fumbled for a moment in the inside pocket of his long frock coat; then drew from it a bill folder and took out a sheet of paper which he thrust under the lawyer's nose triumphantly. " Read that," he exclaimed.

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In the glimmering twilight Clarke could just make out the substance of the letter. The expression on his countenance indicated that the Honorable Peter had not counted on its effect in vain. Amazement succeeded curiosity and a grim shutting of the lip succeeded amazement.

The politician watched his every shade of feeling. He gave the lawyer a chance for comment, but none was forthcoming.

"Don't ask questions—where I got it," he said finally. "No one must know it's used—if you have to use it. That I leave to you. But this trick must be taken, or you're off the political map. Understand?"

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XIV

HE YOUNG lawyer stood gazing in perplexed fashion at the round and expansive face of the political boss, perplexity in his eyes and a more serious emotion in his breast. Here was a new and unexpected complication, the balancing off on opposing sides of his ambition and the tenderer desires of his heart. He knew Mulvey to be a hard man and he was well aware that that astute gentleman never talked, when he was in earnest, for the mere sake of listening to his ponderous voice. That he was in earnest now there was no shadow of doubt.

Major Gray's appearance on the veranda put an end, for the time being, to Clarke's mental disturbance. The old soldier advanced a step or two, looking with keen suspicion at his visitors. As usual, the Honorable Peter was the first to offer a reassuring word.

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"I was just asking for you, Major," he declared genially. "If you can spare a moment I've a matter to submit to you. Er—shall we go inside?" with a rather significant look at Clarke.

"Out here will do," returned the major stiffly.

"Anywhere suits me," was the easy response. "By the way, are you going, Clarke?"

The lawyer looked at his watch and saw on its polished dial more than the time of day.

"Yes," he returned in a matter-of-fact way. "I should be down at my office now. Going down town, Paul?" he added to the boy, who had just come into evidence from his distant corner.

The young man nodded sulkily and together they left the grounds.

The major turned to the politician with a movement of impatience, and observed brusquely: "Say what you have to say, Mr. Mulvey, and in a few words."

Peter's time-worn but effective smile was

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in no way soured. "You've seen *The Banner* to-day?"

"Yes," was the curt response.

"Well," said the Honorable Peter bluntly, rolling his big cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other, "your little scheme to rob the city is killed."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the major, his hand tightening angrily on his cane.

"Just what I've said, Gray. A damn fine reformer you are."

The major's eyes blazed with wrath and his mouth twitched as if trying to restrain sulphurous language. He had long resented the familiarity of Mulvey, and this feeling was in no way lessened by the fact that that gentleman had on more than one occasion proved convenient to him; but this bearding of the lion in his own den was something that fired the hot blood of the old soldier to more than his usual combativeness.

He raised his cane at a threatening angle and took a half step toward the politician as if to run his substantial body through.

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"Mulvey!" he shouted the while, "if you've come here to insult me—"

The Honorable Peter raised his huge hand warningly.

"Hold up, hold up," he returned. "I've come to make a bargain with you. I don't care what you and your gang do down at City Hall. You are hard up, Gray—I happen to know it—and if you'll let this franchise go through I'll see that you get a block of stock that will fix you all right."

The major sneered disdainfully. He knew, as Mulvey knew, that he was in dire need of that which is so often mistakenly called "the root of all evil," but not even his pressing necessities and the prospect of relieving them sufficed to remove one fixed idea.

"Oh, you come from Meyer, of course," he sneered.

"No. He knows nothing of it. *He* won't parley with you. You can bet on that. But I *will*. It's my business. You'll get ten thousand shares of the new telephone stock if you'll call off Jones. Will you do it?"

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The major flamed into a tremendous outburst of anger.

"I'll see you damned first," he roared. "I'll form no alliance with Meyer, direct or indirect. Go back and tell him so."

The Honorable Peter was now angered in his turn. "Cut your own throat if you want to," he growled. "There won't be many at your funeral."

Another violent answer was smothered in the major's throat by the noiseless and sudden appearance of a maid bringing a card on a little salver. The major took it with a half-muttered oath and held it up to the light of the electric lamp in the roof above.

"H'm!" he snorted. "It's that McBride woman. What the devil does she want now, I wonder? Well, show her out here."

The politician glared his displeasure at what he considered a highly discourteous reception of the fair Clarissa's name, but he had no chance for framing his resentment into words before the lady herself came briskly out of the French window and, with a

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bow and a pleasant " Good evening " to each, plunged at once into the business on hand.

" Major," she rattled on glibly, " I'm interviewing all the prominent men on Mr. Meyer's splendid gift to the city and I'd like an expression from you."

It is not to be supposed that Mrs. McBride would intentionally wave a cloth of scarlet before an already infuriated bull, but whether or no, the effect of her words upon the major was identical. He drew himself to his full lank height and glared at her from under his bushy gray eyebrows.

" You must excuse me, madam," he said pompously, starting for the interior of the house.

Mrs. McBride, in no way cast down, plucked him by the sleeve with a gay laugh.

" Oh, I couldn't do that," she declared. " A man of your prominence to have no views on the matter? Why, Major! "

" I have my views but I don't care to express them," returned the old soldier, still more curtly than before.

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" Don't you think it was a grand thing to do? " persisted the " reporteress." " So generous, so patriotic? "

The major threw his cane down on the veranda with a resounding bang.

" Meyer had his own ends to serve, madam. He's a scheming Hebrew."

" Good gracious! " cried Clarissa, her journalistic *sang-froid* totally upset by this unexpected outburst. She was in no way reassured by hearing a soft but elephantine chuckle which she recognized as coming from the cavernous interior of the Honorable Peter Mulvey.

The major was not to be stopped. " He's no more patriotic than—a—goat," he went on angrily. " He's trying to make political capital for his own purposes. He's a meddling, impudent—"

" Softly, softly, Major," interrupted Mr. Mulvey, whose bump of caution was at all times well developed and apt to be especially so on interviews in the half-dark. " Remember you are talking for publication."

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"*Such* an interview!" cried Mrs. McBride, clasping her hands in professional ecstasy. She had now arisen to the demands of the occasion and of *The Banner*.

"Ugh, ugh," growled the major with intense disgust. "Damn all reporters!" And he turned on his heel and walked savagely away, leaving the Honorable Peter gasping for breath in his mirth and Mrs. McBride intoxicated with delight by the prospect of creating a sensation next morning.

"Well, *what* do you think of that?" she demanded of the Honorable Peter.

"That? Sure, it was the honest cry of a tortured soul. Now see here, Mrs. McBride, this is the second good story I've given you in two days."

"You?" was the puzzled question.

"Sure, I'd worked the old boy up so that when you came on the job he had to break loose or bust."

Clarissa had taken a seat on a little wicker bench and fell to scribbling something in her notebook.

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"You certainly know how to take credit to yourself," she observed as she scratched away with her well-sharpened pencil.

The Honorable Peter, finding no flavor of hostility in this remark, took imminent risks with himself and the bit of wicker furniture by sitting down beside the buxom reporter.

"I'm seldom troubled with bashfulness—save in your presence, Widow McBride," he replied in his best style of diplomacy.

Diplomatically, too, he carelessly threw one arm along the back of the seat behind her. Did she draw away from him a little? he wondered. If a little, it was a very little and an easy matter for his sizable arm to close the gap that her shrinking had occasioned.

"And then it does not afflict you oppressively," laughed the lady.

Peter heaved a sigh something akin to the blast from a furnace. "Ah," he said with great humility, "if you only knew how hard it was to keep my heart from jumping out of my mouth into your lap."

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"Goodness!" cried the startled Mrs. McBride, once more remembering to draw from him perceptibly.

Once more likewise the Mulvey arm followed. "Don't draw away, Cla-ris-sa!" he begged. "The Irish should keep together."

"I'm not Irish."

"Well, your name isn't exactly Eye-talian."

"That's not my fault," said Mrs. McBride tartly. "It is my late husband's."

"God rest him well," said the Honorable Peter in a tone that expressed no particular regret. "I'm sure his first name was Patrick."

"It was Michael."

"Well," replied the politician with an unctuous laugh, "that's full brother to Patrick. But never mind the has-beens. I'm asking you to try it again."

"It? What?" asked Clarissa in a tone that was meant to express bewilderment. It hardly succeeded.

"There's but one thing a widow tries again," said the Honorable Peter with decision. "And that's marriage."

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" Oh ! " cried Mrs. McBride.

" Yes, it's sudden, but you'll get over it."

Clarissa smiled coyly. Was it sheer imagination that led the Honorable Peter to believe that the scarcely perceptible space between her shoulders and his arm had now become imperceptible altogether?

" Do you know what a great man once said of second marriage? "

" No. What? "

" He called it," she returned slowly, and looking out of a corner of her eye to note its effect upon the politician, " he called it ' the triumph of hope over experience.' "

Mulvey merely sniffed his contempt for the unknown philosopher. " And you call *him* a great man? " he observed. " Well, sure, I'll prove him wrong." And as if to put the proof in evidence at once Mr. Mulvey somehow slid his disengaged hand into one of the widow's.

" Mr. Mulvey ! " said the lady with dignity, gently pushing away his fat fingers. " I haven't accepted you yet."

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"Don't let that worry you," said the Honorable Peter good-naturedly. "I'll overlook it."

"And besides, I shall never marry a politician."

"You don't have to. I'm going to retire as soon as I get that telephone franchise. I can afford to," he added to himself.

"Well, in that case," said Mrs. McBride, half dubiously, "I—"

"Go on," said Peter with a triumphant smile. "Don't you see I'm nervous?"

The lady rose suddenly. "I'll consider your proposal," she said brusquely, "and *may* accept the bid."

At this Peter, too, jumped up with firm determination in his heart. "Glory be! I'll put up the forfeit now," he cried.

But the Honorable Peter's attempt in this direction was foiled. Mrs. McBride was a good player of games of chance and she did not propose to lay down her whole hand at this particular moment. With somewhat practiced skill, she evaded the politician's

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arms and swiftly made her way down the steps and out the gravelled walk to the street.

Mr. Mulvey gazed after her disappearing figure with amorous satisfaction.

" Well," said he in happy soliloquy, " I've put a bee in Clarke's bonnet, opened a hornet's nest about Gray's head and distilled a little honey into the Widow McBride's heart. Begorra, a foine evening's work."

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XV

MAX MEYER went forth from his father's presence, his heart warm with passionate joy and his brain seething with half-formed plans for the immediate future. One lion, at least, across the path to the Delectable Country had been subdued and that, to a man of his race, was a wonderfully satisfactory accomplishment.

Despite his determination only a few moments ago to proceed along his own way, to cut the ties of family love and loyalty that had so long bound him, there was deep down in his soul that wonderful Hebraic quality, the quality of loyalty to kindred.

But now there need be no severing of bonds, no flying in the face of ancient form and of almost unconquerable habit. Nathan Meyer had blessed his son and through him the girl whom that son loved.

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So as Max Meyer went to his den the old familiar objects in the room seemed to dance with delight before his eyes. He set himself to reading, but his heart was too joyous for printed words and he tossed the book aside with a gay snatch of Parisian song. Then he set his hand at inditing a poem to his beloved mistress' eyebrows, but he swore that he wrote the veriest nonsense and nothing came of that attempt.

Suddenly the whim seized him to walk abroad; to pace rapidly the streets around the home of the Grays as if on the duty of a sentinel. He arose and put on his hat and coat. As he did so, his hand lightly touched the bill book in his inner pocket, and there came trooping before his consciousness the whole series of events that might prove so disastrous to the family of the girl he loved.

One great satisfaction was his. The note, with its damning signature, was safe. It was paid and in his pocket. So far the world was defrauded of a choice bit of scandal.

All at once, however, there came across

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his mental vision the letter of Moss Abrams. He had not thought of that. It was in the office of Meyer & Son, in the safe, he trusted, but at all events a thing that must be destroyed, and at once. Some clerk, in the daily round of his duties, might see it and there would at once be put into his hands a powerful weapon for calamity.

He decided to find Jacob Strauss and see what light the old retainer could shed upon the delicate subject. Fortune favored him, for, at that moment, Strauss came in from the garden and passed through the hall on the way to his own room. Max Meyer blocked his progress and seized him earnestly by the arm.

"That letter, Jacob," he said rapidly, "where is it at this moment?"

"What letter?" returned Strauss shrugging his shoulders almost imperceptibly.

"You know the letter I mean," was the stern reply. "There's only one letter in the whole office of Meyer & Son that I care a straw about—the letter of Moss Abrams."

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"Oh, the Moss Abrams letter, Mr. Max. Ah, yes, you see, I—"

"Jacob," said the junior partner slowly, "I want you to go down to the office this evening and get that letter."

The old man's lips twitched furtively and a faint suggestion of color came into his ashen cheeks. He shifted uneasily from foot to foot and buttoned and unbuttoned his long coat about his thin chest. Finally he made a virtue of necessity.

"The fact is, Mr. Max," he said humbly, "we haven't the letter any more."

"Haven't the letter? What do you mean, Jake?"

"I mean that I have given it to another who will use it discreetly—oh, very discreetly—in bringing your father's enemies to terms."

"Given it to another!" echoed Max in astonishment. "Why you—but who has it? To whom have you given it?"

"To Peter Mulvey," answered Jacob after a moment's hesitation.

He answered as if expecting some outburst

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of wrath from the younger Meyer, but Max was altogether too hot upon the trail to think of reprisals upon Jacob. He dashed into the library, snatched the receiver from the telephone stand and called the number owned by the Hotel Jarvis.

"Hello. Hotel Jarvis? . . . That you, Emerson? . . . Mr. Mulvey's room, please. Hello, Mulvey . . . What? . . . Oh, very well. Just gone, have they? . . . Glad of it. . . Now see here, Strauss says he gave you that letter from New York. . . What letter? Oh, come, Pete, you know very well what letter. . . Haven't got it? . . . What? . . . Given it to Clarke? Well, by—" And he slammed the trumpet-shaped piece of rubber back on its hook and for a moment paced the room in consternation and wrath. Then he took the telephone again and tried by every means to learn the whereabouts of the lawyer.

Later he discovered, by going to the Hotel Jarvis, that Clarke and young Gray had been playing billiards there and that they had just left for Paul's home.

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Fear lent speed to Max Meyer's every move. He realized that on that very night perhaps Clarke might produce the letter for some sinister purpose of his own, so he hailed a carriage and was driven post-haste to the Gray house, and was delighted to see, as he alighted on the sidewalk, the two men coming up the street together, arm in arm.

The gait of the younger man was a trifle unsteady and he leaned heavily upon his companion. Max stood directly in their path toward the gate.

"Do I interrupt?" he asked pleasantly enough, as the pair came within speaking distance.

"Hello, Meyer," said the lawyer carelessly. The boy, however, stared coldly at him and paid him no more attention than if he were the mate to the iron hitching-post in front of the curb.

"How are you, Paul?" said Meyer, extending his hand with a smile. "I've seen you but once since I came home and then you didn't *see* me. How are you?"

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The young man ignored the proffered hand and replied thickly: "The less I see of you, Meyer, the better pleased I'll be."

"What's the trouble, old man?" said Max gravely. "It takes two to make a quarrel and I'm not conscious of offending you."

"Oh, cut it out," growled the young scion of the house of Gray, turning his back completely on the man who was even then attempting to befriend him, and fumbling with the latch of the gate, preparatory to entering the garden.

But Max Meyer had no intention of letting him bundle himself off in that fashion. He grasped him by the arm and fairly turned him about.

"See here, Paul," he said, "don't you think an explanation would be at least—fair? We have known each other all our lives, Paul. I am some older than you, and we've drifted apart in these last few years, but it's not so long ago, after all, that you and I were playmates, in spite of the difference in age. Do you remember, you once saved

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me from drowning—down at the old swimming-hole—though I was nearly twice your size? Do you think I've forgotten that, old fellow? Come, let's get together again."

"Not on your life!" cried the other with sudden anger, "You sneak!"

Max Meyer's mouth grew severe with anger, and self-pride mounted up hot within him. Yet he still kept his temper.

"I would recall those words, Paul," he said. "You may regret them."

The boy laughed in vinous, guttural fashion and leered at Meyer as he replied, "Never less than now. You'll oblige me by forgetting the days you speak of, as I have done."

At this the junior partner of Meyer & Son tightened his grasp on the boy's wrist until the latter winced with pain and dropped his pipe from his mouth.

"You little fool!" said Meyer in a cold and biting tone. "If a thrashing would do you any good I'd—. But I'm sorry for you. Sorry for your ignorance. Go mend your manners. Clarke, a word with you."

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The boy, with painful effort, stooped over and picked up his pipe; put it in his pocket and shuffled into the garden, rubbing his wrist as he went.

"Fire away," said the lawyer carelessly.

At this Paul turned again. "I'm going in," he muttered. "Will you come, Clarke? We may find some *privacy* in the house."

"I'll follow you in a moment," replied the lawyer. Then to Max: "Now, what is it?"

"This," returned Meyer, his face hard with a settled determination. "I've been trying to find you, but you've kept out of my way. Where's that letter taken from our office by Peter Mulvey and given to you?"

Clarke laughed with exasperating coolness. "Ho, ho!" he cried. "You're getting reckless, Meyer."

"I notice you don't deny any knowledge of it."

"Hardly," replied the lawyer, easily, "when it's in my pocket at this moment. . . . I have it. . . . What are you going to do about it?"

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"What do you intend to do with it?" was the answering question.

The lawyer snapped his fingers and pulled forth a fresh cigar, as if for the fumigation of the situation.

"That's my affair," he said bluntly. "I sum the situation up like this—and he counted off the points on his fingers as he made them. "I've got a letter that, if made public, would disgrace an entire family. You can't do anything about it because publicity is the chief thing you fear. I won't restore the letter because that would defeat the end I have in view,"—puff, puff—"so there we are."

"Clarke, you're mistaken," said Max Meyer with intense earnestness and with something in his voice that should have warned the other. "You are mistaken. My only desire is to shield this family from disgrace."

The other smiled and disbelief was plain in his face even in the uncertain light of the street lamps.

"You'll have to show me," he sneered. "Where's the note?"

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" Paid, and in my pocket."

" Very clever," returned the lawyer with a knowing smile. " You'd be doubly armed if you had the letter. I'd rather fancy it's safer in my keeping."

Max's eyes blazed with sudden wrath and the muscles of his arms twitched as if eager to wreak vengeance on this fellow who was so wilfully misunderstanding his motives.

He thrust his face close to Clarke's and demanded almost in his ear: " What are you going to do with that letter? "

" Just as I damn please," replied the lawyer, with the utmost unconcern. " For one thing I may show it to the major and warn him to acknowledge the note."

" In other words, ' smash ' him."

" Or I may show it to Doris and warn her against the man who would harm her brother."

" In either case, Clarke," said Meyer, with studied and dangerous deliberation, " you'd be a blackguard. Now," he continued, moving back a step, " look out for yourself. I'm going to take that letter from you."

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XVI

THE TWO men stood glaring at each other after the manner of a pair of wrestlers; Clarke, somewhat the heavier and swelling up like an infuriated turkeycock; Meyer, as tall but more slenderly built and beautifully muscled. At last Clarke spoke.

"So you're going to take the letter away from me, are you?" he asked with challenge in his tone. There was no cowardice in Clarke and that his opponent well knew.

Max Meyer nodded slowly, without for a moment relaxing his readiness for attack.

"We'll see about that."

Clarke felt rather than saw Max Meyer's well trained biceps stiffen and he perceived a little thrusting forward of the body.

At that precise stroke of time the Grays' front door opened and a woman came upon the porch.

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"Mercy me!" she cried, noting the belligerent attitude of the men.

The antagonists at once relaxed into the ordinary postures of civilized and peaceable gentlemen, shamed and startled out of their pugnacity.

Yet, as they moved away from each other with an assumption of ease, the lawyer whispered hoarsely: "I'll see you later, Meyer."

"I shall be at home to-night," was the answer.

Ellen Carter descended the steps and with a smile came towards the gate to greet the young men at closer hand.

"What's it all about, boys?" she asked cheerfully.

The lawyer scowled but put on the semblance of an answering smile.

"Oh, just a little difference of opinion," he stammered.

Ellen looked from one to the other quizzically.

"It's lucky it isn't a big difference," she

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said, " or we might have to call in the coroner. I've noticed there are only two things that make men glare at each other like that—love and politics. Now which was it?. . . I'll make a guess. It *wasn't* politics. . . . Now, if I were a young man, or two young men, and in love with a girl I wouldn't fight over her. I'd just ask her to decide for herself. That would make it a good deal easier for one young man anyhow, don't you think so?"

Again her keen eye went from one to the other, trying to find in either the solution she instinctively knew should be right, yet almost feared was impossible.

Max Meyer's lip curled into a faint smile, while Clarke looked bored and irritated.

" Miss Carter, really you're talking nonsense," he said ungallantly, but the woman went on without heeding him.

" Of course, if the girl couldn't decide, then the young men might draw straws for her, or raffle her off. Anything but fight. . . . Here she comes now. Try my advice."

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And she turned into the garden gate, laughing softly to herself.

It was she—the inexpressible she, to both men, the one woman whose very name spelt "Love," the girl who had softened the heart of the man of law and fired the soul of the poet. It was she, in street costume, ready for a walk.

Down the steps she ran and by some strange chance—perhaps the light from the street lamp guided her, or perhaps not—she went at once to Max Meyer and held out her hand, passing Clarke as she did so, and that same light might have been responsible for a look upon her face that was gladness itself.

"No need of straws here," said Ellen Carter to herself as she finally disappeared down the garden path, chuckling with the pleasure of her discovery.

Max was the first to speak. "Doris," he said quickly, "I have something special to say to you. May I speak with you—alone?" The last word was accompanied by a significant glance at Clarke.

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" Goodness, is it so pressing?" asked Doris with a glad smile, a smile that seemed to lose a little of its vivacity as the lawyer came forth from the shadows.

" I've been waiting for you, Miss Gray," he said resolutely.

" Will you walk a short distance with me, Doris?" persisted Meyer, as if there were no Clarkes, no rivals in the whole world.

" I was going to ask for the same pleasure," said Clarke, in no wise disposed to discontinue the battle.

At these interchanges of demands, the girl laughed outright.

" Really, this is embarrassing," she cried. " Why not all go together?"

" I fear we would not make a harmonious whole," said the lawyer significantly.

And here Ellen Carter's words bore their harvest. Had not that wise woman only a few moments ago suggested the drawing of lots as a means of taking Cupid's work out of his own plump little hands?

" We'll settle it this way," Max Meyer

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said decisively. He stooped to the curb and plucked two blades of grass still showing gaily green against the autumn's frosts. He held them up in his hand with a laugh. "The long one represents Clarke. The short one myself. . . . Choose, Doris."

"Yes, choose," agreed the lawyer, gravely.

The girl looked from one man to the other in wide-eyed surprise and with a nervous little smile. Surely this was a strange and unaccountable game in which she felt herself merely a pawn. Yet it was no foolery. She knew, as her eyes turned from one face to the other, that under the seeming pleasantry was a depth of striving and of desire that no men in holiday mood would have arranged.

"Is this a tragedy?" she asked, intending her voice to be of the mock-heroic order, but in reality finding it sounding very serious indeed even to herself.

"Choose!" repeated Max relentlessly.

The girl slowly put out a gloved hand for the grasping of one of the blades; had taken it between her fingers, in fact, when

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they were all startled by loud laughter and a still louder voice that cried upon the evening air:

"Drawing straws, eh? Don't mind me. I like what the men at the office call a good gamble, myself."

Doris Gray gave a little startled cry and dropped her hand. Max Meyer said something under his breath that might not have been agreeable to the charming widow, and the lawyer, less tender for the feelings of others, growled almost audibly:

"She's a public nuisance."

"You see," continued the nuisance cheerily, absolutely oblivious to the fact that her coming had ruined a great moment in the lives of three young persons, "I left my feather boa when I was here interviewing your father. If you will permit it, I'll go in for it. But first, I want to congratulate you, Max."

"On what?" asked Meyer with surprise.

"Your story, 'The End of the Road,'" returned Clarissa, speaking very rapidly.

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"Mr. Strauss let me have the manuscript and I read it last night, and it's really very good. It quite surprised me. Doris, you didn't know Max had literary aspirations, did you?"

Doris laughed with nearly the same indulgence that she would have shown towards a child in his attempts to perform architectural feats with his blocks.

"Why, Max!" she cried with sweet incredulity.

That gentleman looked daggers at Clarissa during her glib recital of the facts of his authorship.

"I am flattered, Mrs. McBride, beyond words," he said sarcastically.

But the lady was not to be put down. She was in the act of patronizing a new light in the firmament and it pleased her.

"Oh, you are quite promising, Max," she said kindly. "I'll publish your story and will give you, say, $10 for it."

"You overpower me," said Meyer with great humility. "Unfortunately, I sent it

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away some weeks ago. That is the first draft you read."

"You sent it to a magazine?" cried the widow in great excitement. "Goodness, Max, have they accepted it?"

Meyer shrugged his shoulders evasively: "I'm waiting to hear from it," he answered.

"And I"—came the ponderous voice of the Honorable Peter Mulvey, who had finished the last remnant of his business with the major and had just sauntered contentedly up the garden walk,—"I am waiting for you, Mrs. McBride. You've not forgotten you're going down town with me, have you?"

"You're going down town with *me*," corrected the fair Clarissa. . . ." Well, good-bye, Doris. . . .Oh, I must run in and get that boa." And she suited the action to the word, returning in a marvelously short time to put her plump hand on the still plumper arm of the Honorable Peter, and sally forth under his formidable escort, nodding and smiling good-bye to the others as she went down the street.

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" Max, do let me know what becomes of your story," she cried without turning her head. " I'm so interested in the work of all beginners. Good-bye."

" Good-bye," shouted the politician holding a disengaged hand aloft and waving it in what he considered a graceful form of farewell.

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XVII

ORIS GRAY looked after the large politician and his fair convoy and laughed aloud. Max, however, was in no mood for hilarity. He did not even smile, though at other times he might have turned a neat jest on the disappearance of the twain. Weighter things bore upon the junior partner of Meyer & Son now.

Gently he led the girl through the gate into the garden and as gently impelled her to sit on a bench beneath some fast-withering shrubbery. Clarke had vanished, Max knew not whither, nor cared. He only knew that the night was balmy and that a brilliant hunter's moon was just rearing its splendid circle in the east. As he gazed down at the fair-haired girl, now his own for a moment or two, the warm tumult of love that had pulsed in his heart for many days would no longer be stayed.

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" Doris," he said, and there was that in his tone that warned the girl of what was to come. " Doris, I have sought you again and again for an answer to a question—you must know what. You cannot evade me longer. Doris, my heart has been yours steadily, unswervingly for years. Absence has only increased my love. If you cannot return it, say so, and I'll bear it like a man. But if you do love, me, dear, say that also and I'll bear it—if I can."

The girl's eyes half closed with what seemed uncertainty. For a moment she was silent. Then after a little sigh:

" Oh, Max, I don't know how to answer you. I—I care for you, but I'm not sure it's in the way you want, or I would want. . . And my father. He would never consent."

" Because?—" asked Max significantly.

The girl's eyelids opened now with a sudden blaze of feeling. " Oh, it's all so miserably foolish," she cried. " Don't discuss it."

" Is that the only obstacle?"

" No, no," returned Doris decisively. " The

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man I marry must be willing to sacrifice everything for my happiness, as I would for his. How can I say that you—or I—would meet this test?"

The young man smiled and put his hand almost caressingly upon the arm of the bench.

"I could meet it, Doris," he said with measured tones.

"Oh, if I were sure, if I were sure." Then with sudden emphasis: "Max, I cannot answer you now. Give me time." She rose and took his hand as if pleading for her own self-will against the promptings of her heart.

Suddenly there flashed into Meyer's mind something she had said to him before—words of half scorn telling him that she believed him to be but a well-formed drone in the great hive of human activities. He would test her here, he thought.

"But if I were famous—if my name were known wherever the English language is spoken—would it influence you?"

The girl shook her fair head and the

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ripples of her hair gleamed in the autumn moonlight.

"No. You must be something more to me than that. Can't you see, Max, that I don't know my own heart?"

"When will you learn it, Doris?"—their hands were still together. "Can I not teach you the lesson of love? In my heart but one image is enshrined—yours. . . . In my thoughts but one woman reigns—you. . . . In my hopes but one object is centered—you. . . . That's love, Doris. Do you recognize it—from the promptings of your own heart?"

He had hoped with the wild desire of youth that he might feel some answering language from the hand that was within his own. But it was not yet to be.

"I—I don't know," replied the girl softly. "Perhaps, Max, my heart is sleeping. It may require some shock to awaken it and then —oh, Max, give me time, my dear."

The young man dropped the pretty hand with a gesture of hopelessness. Why should

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he retain longer that which, though soft and delightful to the touch, was but the hand of friendship as yet untransformed?

"As you will, Doris," he said sadly. "I shall not proffer you my love again. It is yours, now and always. When you want it—when you need it, Doris—you must come to me and ask for it."

The girl raised her head and looked him squarely in the eye. "That I shall never do, and you would not ask it if you truly loved me."

Neither had seen the tall form of the major approaching from behind the shrubbery. That old soldier, however, had been reconnoitering. He had heard voices in the garden, especially the voice of the man who, to him, represented all that was hostile and unjust, and had come within earshot, protected by the trees and the shrubs of his garden.

At the final words of his daughter, he staggered as if he had been struck a blow in the breast and then, with clenched hands, stepped into the moonlight.

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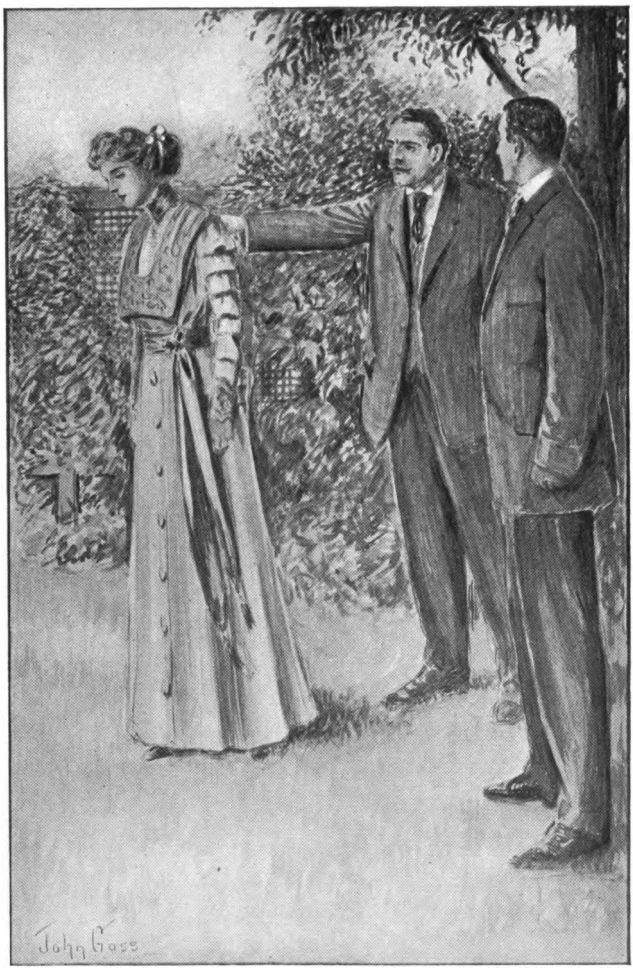

"Go into the house, girl; I say"

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"What words were those you used, Doris?" he shouted.

The girl gave a little cry and recoiled from him—somewhat closer to Max, as he remembered afterwards. The young man faced the old soldier calmly.

"Go into the house, girl; go, I say," thundered the irate father.

Doris hesitated a moment; then slowly walked away, but not without one last appealing look at Max. He followed her with his eyes, then turned and faced the major.

"So you presume to speak words of love to my daughter?"

"Yes, it was presumption; I am not worthy of her."

The soldier smiled sarcastically. "Ah, you confess it. You realize the difference between you."

The other raised his hand warningly. "You misunderstand me, sir. I mean that no man is worthy of her. But such as we men are, I claim an equal right with any to address her."

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"Ha," sneered the major. "You look high—for one so low."

"Each man is what he makes himself," came the reply without emotion. "Each family, however great, had at some time a beginning, even yours—Do you refer to me, Major Gray, or my family?"

"Oh, to both," snorted the old soldier.

"I'm yet to be tried," returned the young man, "but my family, sir, can trace its descent from the days of King Solomon. How far can *you* go back?"

"So far that I can find no trace of a Gray marrying a Jew."

"So that's it. I'm a Jew."

"Yes, that is it. I don't like you or your kind; money-grabbers, nothing more." He shrugged his shoulders and switched his cane across the gravel walk.

The younger man spoke quietly enough, but with suppressed intensity.

"If I grant that—and I do not—what has made us so? Age-long oppression in every land under the sun—even here, *now*,

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by such as you! . . . Is it a cause for wonder, Major Gray, that a people who for fifteen hundred years could not own real estate; could not hold office; could not even walk the streets unless tabbed like slaves, should have developed a genius for money-making—when nothing *but* money could buy off their oppressors?. . . . . Is it a wonder?"

He stepped nearer, his hands clenched.

"This doesn't interest me," returned the man, "I—"

"You have vilified my people," continued Max Meyer vehemently, "and in justice should hear their defense! . . . I *am* a Jew, and I glory in the history and traditions of my race. . . . You have called us 'money-grabbers—nothing more.' Who made the journey of Columbus possible? A Jew! Who first sighted the new land—who first stood on American soil? Jews! . . . Have we no generosity—patriotism—culture? Have you forgotten—or do you *know?*—that a Jew furnished half a million dollars to carry on the war for independence? Do you know that

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eight thousand Jews served in our Civil War, and four thousand in the war with Spain? . . . Do you know of Spinoza, the philosopher; Mendelssohn, the composer; Herschel, the astronomer; Messena, the general; Disraeli, the statesman, and a hundred others as great—all Jews?"

"Bosh!" came the major's comment.

"The greatest poem of the age—the 'Book of Job'—was by a Jew. But that is—'bosh!' The sweetest heart song ever sung—'Home, Sweet Home'—was by a Jew. And *that*, too, is 'bosh!'"

Major Gray's assumption of indifference disappeared. As he realized that he was being flouted, argued down—almost insulted by the son of the man he hated, his face grew purple and his eyes stared from their sockets.

"I refuse to listen to you longer. Your presence is unwelcome and—"

"One moment, sir. Though I know your answer beforehand, I shall do you the courtesy and myself the honor to ask you for your daughter's hand, if I can win it."

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The old soldier thrust his cane far down into the gravel as if for support.

"Damn your insolence," he cried, shaking his disengaged hand in the resolute face before him. "I—"

"Wait!" cried another voice, a clear, well modulated, incisive voice that seemed to have imperiousness because of its freedom from passion.

The major turned sharply to see before him the man he hated.

"Before you decide, Major Gray," said Nathan Meyer, "let me have a word with you in private. It is of vital importance. I came here to see you on another matter, but this takes precedence."

The major, startled even out of his wrath by the sudden appearance, recovered his self-possession.

"I can conceive of nothing you could say, sir, that would alter my decision," he replied stiffly, moving down the walk towards the great veranda of the house.

"Wait for me, Max," whispered father

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to son, "and we'll go home together."

"Do not bring Paul into this, father," said Max earnestly.

Nathan shook his head slowly with a faint smile, and followed his unwilling host up the steps.

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XVIII

THE MAJOR stalked grimly into the house, Nathan Meyer following with the persistence of a hunting dog. Having reached this point in their relations, he had no intention of quitting the Gray mansion without a still better and fuller understanding. So he hung close to the heels of the angry old soldier, who more than once deliberated as to the propriety of turning suddenly and hurling him off the veranda. But that innate sense of hospitality that existed in the major's race, however blunted in himself, kept him from any act of scandalous violence.

He led the way, without a word, to the library; turned on an electric light and motioned Meyer almost savagely to his own big leather chair. He himself took a seat at the end of a gigantic couch.

" Be brief, please," said the major severely,

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and Meyer plunged at once into the affair of the evening with no more preliminary courtesies than the major had shown.

"I have wished to be on friendly terms with you, Major Gray, but you would not permit it."

The old soldier made an impatient gesture of assent. "That is neither here nor there," he answered stiffly.

"I beg your pardon," was the reply, deliberately given. "It is—right *here*. Your people have lived in this town for generations. I have lived here but forty years, yet in this time I have outstripped you in every point—in wealth, in influence and in power generally."

The major flushed and his teeth closed over his under lip.

"This is beside the point," he growled. "*What are you here for?*"

Meyer coolly pulled a cigar from his pocket and struck a match.

"May I?" he said politely, then, without awaiting the permission that was never given, he set fire to his tobacco and proceeded.

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" I am here to talk with you, Major Gray, and to have you listen to me. That's what I'm here for. I'll get to my errand in my own way, and—"

The major almost slid off his couch, then, struggling to his feet, he cried: " By the Lord, sir, this is too much. I bid you good-night."

He pointed with unnecessary significance towards the half-opened door.

Nathan Meyer remained calmly in his seat and puffed twice or thrice on his cigar before he took the trouble to reply to the old soldier's invitation.

" I don't think I'll go yet," he said at last. " We have a little business to transact—the mortgage on this place, you know."

The major plumped violently down on the couch again and showed agitation in every feature. The banker eyed him curiously and smiled with a peculiar downward inflection of the mouth.

" What?" gasped the major, " what have you to do with that?"

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"I thought you'd listen to me," said the banker with measured emphasis. "Kindly remain seated for a while. . . . As I was saying, you resent my rise in this community because you can't prevent it. But let me ask you one question, Gray. Because your fathers lived here before you, have you thought it gave you by right of birth a corner on all the opportunities a growing town presents?"

"To the point, man, to the point," said the major huskily.

Meyer went on as if no one had spoken.

"It gave you an advantage, of course, but you've gone in the wrong way to avail yourself of it. What you thought was yours by right I took by might, and so when it comes down to dollars—which are the measure of achievement these days—I can buy and sell you and not feel it. Rather grinds you, doesn't it, Gray?"

The major squirmed on his couch. He pounded the floor nervously with his heel and at last bethought himself of the solace

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of tobacco, which solace took the form of a generous portion from the corner of a dark and sticky plug.

"The mortgage, the mortgage," he muttered. "What of it?"

"Ah!" replied the banker with his grim smile, a smile that had brought him triumphant through many a great financial deal. "Ah, your impatience is natural. And though I haven't yet reached the object of my visit I'll give you some information. I own a controlling interest in the First National Bank of this city, the stock being held for me in the name of others."

The major again seemed suddenly perturbed, but recovered himself gallantly.

"Well?" he asked, steadily enough.

"Well," said the banker with a little chuckle, "the president and three of the directors hold office through me—though they don't know it. When nearly three years ago you gave a mortgage on this place for forty thousand dollars, the First National loaned you the money. At your request—

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granted by your friends, as you thought—the mortgage was not recorded. So, you see, but few of us know you are in financial straits. Which is what you wanted, eh?"

The major leaned both hands flat upon the couch and crossed his legs in nervous apprehension. Well enough he knew what was coming and to do him credit he tried to meet the issue like the gallant fighter he had once been. But he swayed back and forth unsteadily, as he waited for the banker's next words.

"The mortgage expires in sixty days—" he began.

"So!" shouted the old soldier, pounding the leather couch with both palms, "so this is the reason for your sudden generosity to the city?"

"As you choose," was the exasperating reply. "At any rate, it cut off your hoped-for supplies."

"Damn you!" growled the major, looking as if he would fly at the banker's throat.

Meyer regarded him with calmness.

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"Don't get excited," he said soothingly. "It's bad for men of our years. . . . Now, I have bought this mortgage of the bank,—"

The major rose unsteadily to his feet and put both hands before him, not as a friendly greeting, but as in repulsion.

"You—you hold my notes?" he stammered.

"Exactly. . . . The question I wish to put to you is—" here the banker's voice lowered and each word came from his lips with clear incisiveness—"do you want to lift this mortgage sixty days hence, or would you like it renewed?"

At the words, he felt in his inside pocket and produced the selfsame manila envelope he had entrusted to Jacob Strauss some time before.

At the sight of the familiar packet, the major half sat, half fell on the couch. Then he rose again and proceeded to a little cabinet in a corner of the room and poured out with shaky fingers something of a rather reddish hue, into a tiny glass.

"God! . . . He's got me," he muttered,

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then threw the fluid down his throat with a quick jerk of his hand. The effect of the liquor was rapid. He came back to his couch again and confronted the banker with steadier nerves and a less shifty eye.

"I do want it renewed, but I know the price—my support of the franchise bill."

The banker shook his head. "That was my original intention," he said, "but I've changed my mind. I'll take care of the franchise in another way."

"Ah!" breathed the major. He was thoroughly puzzled now. Nor did the banker's next words enlighten him very much.

"Now I'll come to the point of my call," Meyer went on, leaning suddenly towards the old soldier and pointing a well-shaped finger straight at the major's nose. "I imagine you would sacrifice much, Major Gray, to insure your son's happiness."

"Of course. . . . What do you mean?" replied the major with some apprehension.

The banker suddenly struck the arm of his chair with tremendous force.

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"I mean," he shouted, then checked his emotion and went on more calmly. "I mean that as your son's happiness is everything to you, so is the happiness of mine to me. My son loves your daughter Doris."

At this all the major's anger, all his dislike of the man before him returned. His spirit fortified by the whiskey he had taken, he once more became the fighting man of old. He, too, pounded his seat, then glared at the banker as if the latter had been guilty of gross insult.

"I tell you, sir," he cried, "I refuse to listen—"

"Oh, I don't approve it any more than you do," returned Meyer with undisguised contempt. "My whole inclination is against it—blood, instinct, training. But I am of the older order—the order that is passing amid the birth of new conditions, new habits of thought. My son is of this new order, and I seek his happiness above my own. So—I have come here to make a bargain with you, Major Gray."

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"Well?" said the major inquiringly.

"Withdraw your objection to my boy, let your daughter know it, and then—let him win her if he can. On the day the engagement is announced I will destroy this mortgage deed and retain only your note of hand as evidence of your indebtedness. And on the day they are married I will endorse your note over to your daughter as a wedding gift—and you can pay it when you choose."

"Ah!"

"I will go further," proceeded the banker calmly. "If you will give me your word—now— to agree to this bargain, I will destroy this note and here and now accept a new one from you. If my son fails to win your daughter, your property is safe for three years more; and if he wins her, your debt to me is cancelled. I might drive a harder bargain with you, Major, and insist that your support of the franchise be included in my terms, but I have my own sense of honor, and I do not want this act—born

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of love for my son—to be tainted with sordid motives. . . . The question simply is: Will you permit Max to woo Doris, unmolested, and stand or fall according to his own deserts?"

"By Heaven, Meyer, I'm a ruined man if I say 'no,'" cried Gray. He was fast getting to the point of excusing himself for the surrender he felt was coming.

The shrewd man of money saw the weakening. "Can you point out one valid objection to my son?" he asked earnestly. "Is he not the equal of other men—in breeding, culture, citizenship? Is he ill-favored, of unsound mind, unclean habits?. . . Is the religion of his fathers against him—more than yours against you? Minds, ideals, temperaments differ, and so there must be difference of creeds, yet men can be enough alike in *deeds*—which, after all, is the end religion aims at—to dwell in harmony with one another. Is this not so?" He paused and the major slightly inclined his head. "Ah! My son, then, does not find favor with you solely because of his race—because

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he is a *Jew?* Do you forget that of the Trinity you worship, one—CHRIST—was a Jew? No! None of these things sway you! You have but one objection to my boy—he is the son of his father!"

"But he is an idler," protested the major, but rather weakly now. "He is twenty-six, and has done nothing. It is common talk that he is a disappointment to you in business. Do you intend to support him—and his wife—his life through?"

Nathan raised his head with all the accumulated pride of three thousand years.

"Have you ever seen a Jew begging bread?" he asked solemnly. "*We* take *care* of our own. All that I have is my son's. He is not a disappointment to me. He has plans of his own—what, I do not know—but he will not eat his bread in idleness. You do not know my son."

The major rose from his seat and faced Meyer, his tall form towering over the shorter figure of the banker. He put a hand on Meyer's shoulder in almost friendly fashion.

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It was not altogether the force of the Hebrew's power that was winning him, but something in the latter's attitude that was moving his better nature.

"Well, let him win Doris if he can," he said after a moment's pause. "I'll not stand in his way."

The banker smiled his appreciation of the victory.

"Then let us draw up the new note at once," he said.

The major went to his desk and pulled out a little slip of paper. As he scratched away at its surface with his spluttering gold pen he turned, and as he spoke there was the ring of sincerity in his voice.

"Meyer, I am beginning to believe I have mistaken you—and it hurts like hell to say it."

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XIX

AX MEYER, left alone in the Gray garden, paced back and forth, nervously trying to reconcile in his mind all the varying events of the day. Most of all, he attempted to solve the problem of his father's sudden appearance and his insistence upon following the leonine major into his own den.

He realized that Nathan Meyer was not given to airy speeches and that when he promised his assistance in his son's love affair there was some good and special reason therefor. He knew, too, that his father was a man of power, and he realized that apart from the matter of Paul and the forged note, there must be some way in which the banker gripped the soldier.

Thus reflecting, he lit his pipe and walked up and down the gravelled walks in contemplation, now of the house, now of the moon and

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now of the street in front. In the midst of his reconnoitering he saw a graceful little well-rounded figure coming up the sidewalk. There was something familiar in its almost pert carriage and in the airy back-tilting of the head. And yet he could not for the moment say what.

He could see, even in the moonlight, that the little creature's hair was golden and fluffy; that she was dressed in a deep red cloth suit that bore in every seam and line the mark of a metropolitan tailor, and that upon her head rested a saucy little toque topped off by a military pompon that gave her the appearance of a vivandiere as she marched along towards the gate.

Strangely enough, the stranger opened the barrier and walked smartly in. Then she paused and looked about her on one side and the other with a remarkable show of interest.

" This is all right," she said in a bell-toned voice whose refined beauty was oddly at variance with her words. " This is all right. . . The house is painted a fierce color, but I'll

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change that, and I'll have a green fountain right here with a concrete walk around it and red seats—like in Union Square."

At this Max Meyer, who caught a word or two of the suggestive monologue, walked straight up to the apparition and stopped, face to face with her, at the distance of about a yard. The young lady bowed pertly; then caught her breath in astonishment.

But her surprise was as nothing compared to that of Max.

"Is it—Polly Bigelow?" he exclaimed, at loss, for the moment, for any further words.

"Max?" retorted the girl. "I spotted you at once even in the moonlight, and I haven't seen you for four years, you know."

She held out her beautifully gloved little hand with quite the air of a grand lady, and the junior partner of Meyer & Son took it and shook it heartily.

"I'd know you anywhere, Polly," he said. Then he laughed under his breath. "There are few Columbia men who wouldn't. Are you still manicuring at Madame Delaine's?"

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"Oh, dear, no," cried the girl haughtily. "I'm in charge of the Parisian Parlors on 125th Street."

"Good for you," said Max heartily. "I suppose all the boys are customers still."

"Oh, the best of them—the top-notchers. We don't care for the others."

"But what are you doing so far away from home?" queried Max, coming at last to realize that there was something extraordinary in the appearance of the dainty habitué of Broadway in this city of the Middle West.

The girl smiled complacently and patted one hand with the other.

"Oh, I'm on a little business trip," she replied. . . . "Personal, you know. . . . Nice place this," as she looked up at the house approvingly. "Though I shall probably make a few improvements in it."

"What? You—" Max began with astonishment.

"Are you a friend of Paul Gray?" interrupted Polly with a world of meaning in her voice.

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Max hesitated. "Well, not exactly. . . . But you haven't business with him?"

"That's what," returned the girl, shutting her very red and very full lips together as firmly as was possible to them. "He has promised to marry me and I'm going to make him do it."

This was the cap-sheaf of the surprising things of this most surprising night. Max Meyer started violently; looked around as apprehensively as if he were a burglar seeking out the best means of entering the Gray mansion. Suddenly he seized Polly Bigelow by the arm and led her by main force into a little summer pagoda not far from the large veranda.

"Come in here," he said brusquely. "I want to talk with you."

"Well, you needn't be so rough," she protested. "I'm like glass—you want to handle me with care. . . . What's up, anyway?"

"Sit down here," said Max firmly, and he took a seat opposite her. "Now tell me the whole story—everything."

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"See that sparkler?"

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The young lady smoothed out her tailored skirt, adjusted her toque to a rather saucier angle and faced her inquisitor with pretty determination.

" Tell you everything?" she echoed. " I'd like to know why. You're not on the job."

" Polly!" Max went on sternly. " Tell me everything—straight, mind you,—and I may find a way to make matters right for you."

The girl pouted and remained for a moment or two in sullen silence.

" Oh, I'll tell you," she said at last. " The law is on my side anyway." She deliberately removed the glove from her left hand and held up her third finger with an air of triumph. " See that sparkler? Well, that's an engagement ring. Paul put up for it and I have his letters here,"—tapping a region somewhat close to her heart—" love letters—promising to marry me."

She paused to note the effect of this shaft, but Max had resumed his self-possession by now. Nothing, he realized, could startle him any more.

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" Go on!" he said shortly.

" Well, he blew in a wad on me; shows, suppers, autos and all that. Nothing *wrong*, you know, but made me talked about. And I can't afford to have my ' rep ' injured for nothing."

" And just what do you intend to do?" asked Max slowly.

The girl's lips curled with scorn and defiance. She was willing to be interrogated because she had known Max Meyer and respected him, but she did not propose to be turned aside from the purpose that had brought her a thousand miles or more, by the mere judicial air of any man.

" He hasn't answered my letters since he came home," she said defiantly, " and I'm here to have it out with him—before the whole family if he doesn't toe the mark."

" I see," was the even response. " You would bring disgrace on his father—and sisters."

Polly gave an indignant laugh.

" Huh!" she cried. " I'm a respectable

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girl, I'll have you know, Max Meyer, and marrying me wouldn't disgrace anybody. Paul has got to make good—understand? Or I'll ' sic ' a lawyer on him."

Max was regarding her with amused and tolerant eyes now. He began to see light ahead in this startling affair. He knew Polly and her kind and realized that it was not love that had impelled her to take this journey. He would try another tack.

" Nothing but marriage would content you?" he asked suggestively.

The girl reflected for a moment; looked again at the house and about the garden; pursed her crimson lips reflectively and then said: " Oh,—I—don't—know."

Then Max plumped out the question that he felt was to determine the issue.

" Would you sell those letters, Polly?" he asked.

The young woman opened her eyes very wide; then laughed very loudly.

" Oh, that's the way the cat jumps, is it?" she cried. " You are not friends with Paul,

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but it's different with the sisters, eh?—one of them?"

Max had no answering smile for this. It did not please him that Polly Bigelow should even touch upon a theme that was to him sacred.

"Listen to me," he said sternly. "My office is two hundred and eighty Main Street. You can easily find it. Come over there tomorrow at—at well, I'll 'phone you in the morning—and we'll see what can be done. You'll make more from me, Polly, than from Paul."

"Oh, well," replied the girl after a moment's meditation, "I'm not so stuck on Paul that I've got to have him. He isn't much of a man anyway."

What evil fate brought little Jane Gray to the veranda at this precise moment, Max knew not till long afterwards. At any rate, she came, followed by Doris and the ever faithful Ellen Carter. All three stood silent as if by common impulse, as they heard a very clear and very gay feminine voice proceeding from the pagoda.

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"Then you'll come to-morrow?" said a deeper voice, a voice that pierced Doris Gray's heart with dagger strokes.

"Go back, Doris, go back," whispered little Jane, trying to pull her sister away.

"Yes, I'll come," were the girlish tones from the pagoda, and again Jane tugged at her sister's hand in a vain effort to get her to the house.

"Then leave here at once," said the voice of Max Meyer. "I want no one to see you."

The great round moon had just come from behind the trunk of a huge elm and as if with malice aforethought and a sardonic grin on his florid face, lit up the pagoda with perfect distinctness. Then the little company on the veranda saw the two emerge from the summer-house; saw the round and beautiful little figure of a girl throw one arm about the man and give him a hearty hug.

"Max, you're a dear," cried the voice. "You always were."

Doris Gray ran half way down the steps; then stopped suddenly and would have fallen

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but for the support of the railing. In a moment she recovered herself, straightened her body to its fullest height and steadily looked out upon the scene. She heard the voices of her father and Nathan Meyer as they came out from the library, but they were meaningless sound. She saw little Jane huddled in a great chair, her handkerchief to her eyes, and Ellen Carter leaning over her and patting the brown head.

She realized that her father and her father's enemy were approaching and that they, too, would be witnesses of this horrible *contretemps*. But she stood proudly, and without a word as the major and the banker came to the railing of the veranda and looked out upon the moon-lit garden.

Nathan Meyer started in surprise. "Max," he said in a half whisper.

By this time Polly Bigelow had ascertained that she was the center of widely varied types of observation. There was a whole veranda-ful of people, she realized, not one of whom could by any possibility be suspected of being

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friendly to her. She looked from one to the other quizzically for a moment or two; then tossed her head and burst out laughing.

"This is rich. . . Well, good-bye, Max. . . To-morrow." And she sailed out the garden gate, her head thrown back and her little military toque more saucily set than ever.

Paul Gray sauntered forth, cigarette in mouth, just in time to see the final act of the drama.

"Well, what's up, Doris?" he asked, noting his sister's attitude and the tense way in which she held her head.

The girl suddenly relapsed; smiled contemptuously and said in a voice that was meant to be and was of far-carrying quality: "Oh, nothing. We've simply surprised this gentleman—with his lady-love. She has relieved us of her presence, but he—lingers."

Then the poor little figure of Jane Gray rose hastily from its chair. Without waiting for assistance the girl hobbled down the steps and across the gravelled walk.

"Max, Max!" cried the girl, as she took his

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hand, " you can explain—I know you can. Speak, Max."

The young man slowly shook his head. " I can explain nothing, Jane," he said, with infinite tenderness in his voice.

Here another member of the Gray family stamped down the steps out into the moon-lit patch of the garden. It was Paul, still hot with the liquor he had drunk earlier in the evening, and filled with an unreasoning desire to go forth and annihilate the enemy of the Grays.

" Then leave the place and don't set foot here again!" he shouted, shaking his fist.

The junior partner took one step towards the boy. With a supreme effort, however, he controlled himself and turned towards little Jane.

" Thank you. Your loyalty is not misplaced. . . Doris!" he cried in a sterner voice, " you judge me harshly, but—"

" Oh, go!" was the answering voice.

Max bowed gravely and stood ready to meet his father, who had descended the steps

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and was making his way towards the gate.

"Father," he said earnestly, "will you withhold your judgment—for the present?"

The banker put a hand on Max's shoulder. "My son, let us go home," he replied unsteadily.

Before they reached the gate Jane sprang forward to block, for a moment, the younger man's exit.

"Max! Oh, Max!" she cried in her high voice. "If all the world should doubt you I would still have faith."

The meaning in these words was not lost even upon the dulled sensibilities of the brother.

"Why, you love this fellow—this Jew—yourself," he sneered.

Jane staggered as if struck. Tears sprang to her eyes, but she conquered them as she limped back to the veranda.

For a moment, the sisters gazed at each other with questioning eyes, the one heart grown bitter hard; the other, naked and ashamed.

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XX

FATHER and son walked towards their home in silence. Max now and then stole a sidelong glance at his father's clean-cut, resolute features, but he read nothing therein. He wished that Providence might turn back the wheels of time ever so little and wipe from the books of things accomplished the last half hour.

Then there came over him that sense of fatalism which is at the base of the Hebraic character. What had been must be and he were a vain and impotent railer who should cry out against it. Even though he lose the woman he loved, he could not turn back from the course he had allotted himself. He knew that for what the world might have called a quixotic whim he had, to all appearances, placed his love in the balance with a mere caprice and that the caprice had borne down the scales.

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The two reached home. At the foot of the steps the banker turned and spoke for the first time.

"Max!"

"Yes, father."

"Is there anything you wish to say in explanation?"

"There is nothing that I can say, father—in honor," added the son.

Nathan gave him a swift, scrutinizing glance from under his bushy eyebrows. Then he said simply: "Good night, Max."

"Good night, sir."

With steady step the banker went to his own apartments, Max doing likewise.

In the library old Jacob Strauss, deep in the perusal of a rare edition of the "Talmud," heard them pass the door. His keen observation noted that they parted without a word and went their separate ways. He wagged his gray beard dubiously. This was not the habit of other days!

Surely the house of Meyer was divided against itself. Strauss knew nothing of what

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had been happening, and yet he felt instinctively that things were not for the best. The very air he breathed seemed surcharged with portent of ill and—though God forbid—to the house of Meyer & Son.

"Son!"

His thin lips curled at the word. That which had, a few brief days before, been as milk and honey in his mouth now had the bitterness of gall.

He told himself that it was not he who had changed; it was not he whose fealty had been altered. His heart had, by force of circumstances, been steeled against the junior partner by his indifference to the firm's interests and his pursuit of one fair Gentile.

So Jacob, still making a pretence of delving into the beauties of the "Talmud," listened and waited. Now and then he muttered phrases of self-congratulation.

He was glad, yea, doubly glad, that he had given Lawyer Clarke the inculpating Moss Abrams letter. So much along the road to vengeance was at least secured. The folly of

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the son of the house had robbed it of its principal weapon in the battle for business supremacy. But he had remembered—and he laughed aloud as he thought it—what all but he forgot, the equally damning letter that accompanied the note. He wondered what had become of that letter; whether the astute young lawyer had yet made his move upon the chessboard of politics and finance, using it as his most powerful piece.

Then his musings were cut short by Nathan's step along the hall.

The banker entered the room without a word, and the old retainer realized that he was in no mood for questioning. So he held his peace, though wondering and expectant, as Nathan Meyer went to the telephone and took off the receiver.

"Give me North, 35X," he said in a low voice. . . . "What? . . . Now listen to me, young woman, this line is 'busy' entirely too often. . . You get North, 35X, and tell Major Gray that Nathan Meyer wants to speak with him. If I don't hear from you in five minutes

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you'll be looking for another job to-morrow."

He hung up the receiver and old Strauss believed it safe to venture upon conversation.

"That's the way to do it, Nathan," he said approvingly. "You'll get your number all right—in *three* minutes."

"The major shall do him justice," said the banker solemnly, and as if wholly oblivious of the presence of any other in the room.

The old man's face showed his utter surprise.

"Nathan, I "—he stammered. "I do not understand. I—"

Meyer still went on with his monologue.

"*He* shall know nothing of it. But I'm determined to clear his name. Gray shall judge for himself the kind of son we two fathers have."

Here was something intelligible. Now was drawn an issue which Jacob Strauss could understand. Now came the first skirmish of the great campaign which was to result in the capitulation of the enemy. A cold smile made his features more saturnine than usual.

"Nathan," he said with intense earnestness,

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" why don't you use that forgery to bring him to his knees? Oh, to see him so—for one instant! . . . Why don't you do it, Nathan?"

The banker looked at him gravely. " Why should I?"

" Why?" cried the astounded Strauss. " Do you forget the law: ' An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth'? Is not the man your enemy?"

The banker was silent for a moment, rubbing his hands.

" No," he replied—" at least I hope to make him a friend, and— . . . Well, see here, Jacob, I will not brand his son as a common thief, that's all."

The ancient retainer shrugged his shoulders. At the sudden sharp ring of the telephone bell, he glanced at his watch.

" I told you so!" he said triumphantly.

The banker took the receiver and held it to his ear.

" Yes? . . . Oh! . . . Major, I want to ask you to suspend judgment to-night and to be in

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readiness to meet me half way. . . . That is precisely what I want. . . . Yes, yes. . . . Good night."

"So he's weakening," said Jacob with a grim smile.

"Yes, he's weakening," assented the banker, and the old man's fingers writhed in joy. "And *I'm* weakening."

The writhing ceased and the hawk eyes glittered as they fixed themselves upon their master's face.

"In a way, Jacob, in a way," the banker added as if to soften this blow. "And I may need your help, old friend."

"You can depend on me, Nathan," nodded the other solemnly.

"I know it," returned the banker, his voice swelling with emotion, as he dropped his hand on Strauss' bony shoulder. "In twenty-five years you have never failed me once. That is a long time, Jake, and a wonderful record."

Strauss removed his spectacles and made a brief show of attempting to wipe them with

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his great red handkerchief. It was a diversion that enabled him to press back the floodgates of the eyes that were beginning to weaken.

"I have served you out of the fullness of my love, Nathan—you and the boy."

"I know it, Jake."

"But, Nathan, my days of usefulness are drawing to a close—and then what?"

"Then, old friend," said the banker grasping the hand of his servitor with generous heartiness, "then, old friend, I shall be a staff for you to lean on—I and Max."

Strauss shook his head sadly. "Max?" he repeated. "A broken reed, Nathan, a broken reed!"

"No, no!" cried the other. "He's young, Jake, and fanciful. Have patience with him. He will settle down presently."

But there was no hope in the old man's face.

"You deceive yourself, Nathan," he replied dismally. "You will find no successor in Max. Your business ends when you end. . . .

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Ach, Gott! And yet," he added, as the fires of memory stirred within him and leaped to find expression in an added warmth of eye, " yet I love the boy and I could pardon his waywardness if but he would remain true to the faith."

" He has not forsworn it," declared the father.

" No? Then why should he wish to marry this Christian girl? Nathan," he continued with all the solemnity the thought suggested to him, " a judgment will come upon this house. Can we not avert it? Will not Max listen?"

The father made a gesture of dissent, but the light of great affection and faith illumined his face.

" He has chosen his path," he said simply. " He shall tread it. But not alone, Jacob. My love, *our* love must not fail him."

The words were eloquent and moving, but upon the mind of the old retainer, Hebrew of the Hebrews, they were of no effect.

He rose and lifted his spare, bent figure to

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its fullest height, raising his hand as if in supplication or warning, or both.

" But the law—the law of our people!" he cried. " Who shall depart from it and suffer not?"

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XXI

ATHAN MEYER, more touched than he would have admitted, went to the library window and stood gazing thoughtfully out upon the moon-lit land. Soon he saw two dark figures silhouetted against the silvery light. They were coming across the fields. A moment more and they had entered his own estate, the one tall, straight, walking with the stiffness of a martinet; the other extremely small, misshapen and limping.

"Why, it's Jane Gray!" cried the banker in astonishment.

A moment later he was on the porch of the side entrance of the house, welcoming his visitors with rare cordiality.

"Come in, come in, little girl," he said, giving Jane his hand as she mounted the steps. "What brings you here across the meadow at night?"

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The girl dropped wearily into a chair, by the side of which the faithful Ellen Carter stood, as if on guard, occasionally patting the brown head with gentle affection.

" I wanted no one to know," said Jane. " I must see Max at once."

" Jacob, find Max, will you, please?" said the banker to his assistant, who left the room slowly, his mind occupied with fresh perturbation.

" The poor child is so wrought up," cried Ellen Carter. " Oh, I fear she'll have a fever."

Jane frowned and shrugged her shoulders petulantly. " Ellen, for goodness sake, let my hair alone. . . I'm *not* wrought up and I'm *not* going to have a fever."

The older woman glanced significantly at Nathan as if to say: " There, see; I told you."

The banker came to the girl's chair and took her hand. " I want to thank you, my dear," he said with stately courtesy, " for your brave words this evening. I shall not forget them—nor will Max."

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" She's true blue," broke in Ellen proudly. " My little Janie."

But her little Janie was in no mood for compliments. One great thought filled her heart. For it she had come to the house of her father's enemy. For it she had braved the wrath of every other member of her family.

" Ellen," she said, " would you mind waiting for me somewhere else? . . . It's beautiful out in the moonlight."

The woman's face sobered. " Oh, I'll go, Jane," she said glumly. " Anywhere will do for me."

" Ellen!" cried the elfin girl imperiously. " Come and kiss me!"

Ellen Carter, her heart completely sweetened again, stooped and pressed her lips tenderly upon the soft brown hair.

" It's beautiful outdoors," she confessed cheerfully. " I think I'll go out and enjoy it. If you want me, Janie, just call. I'll be near."

As the door closed Jane Gray turned passionately.

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"Mr. Meyer," she said, "Max is doing wrong. He's trying to shield my—my brother from something, I don't know what, but he is doing it at the cost of his own happiness, and it must not be."

"So you would save him from himself?" queried Nathan.

"Yes, oh yes. I've come to do it if I can." She would have said more had not the object of her solicitude entered the room.

"You've come to see me, Jane?" he asked, taking her hand and pressing it warmly.

"Yes, I have something to say to you. I can stay only a moment."

"Listen to her, Max," said the father gravely. "Her words are words of wisdom."

"Dear little Jane," said Max, stooping suddenly and kissing her on the forehead.

The tiny face was all of a glow in an instant. She caught her breath and clutched the arm of her chair.

This was not lost upon the banker. "Ah, if she were only the other one," he thought, as he left the room.

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Max placed a chair near Jane and sat down. "Now what is it, little friend?"

"Max, I overheard a few words of your conversation with that—that lady," said Jane rather timidly.

"She's not a lady, Jane. . . . Go on!"

"And I'm sure you were trying to keep from us something Paul has done."

"You think so?" asked Max with a smile.

"I know it," was the emphatic response, "and you must not do it, Max—not at the expense of your own good name."

Max gazed at the little creature with a heart full of pity and gratitude. This was the true heart, whose coming meant good cheer.

Then suddenly came another thought.

"Have you spoken of this to any one at home?" he asked.

"Not yet. I wanted to see you first."

"Then, Jane, I want you to promise me to keep silent."

The girl straightened in her chair and her eyes flashed with indignation.

"Max," she said with as much severity as

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the high, clear little voice could assume, " you are shielding Paul for Doris' sake, but you have made her unhappy and you are unhappy yourself."

" Ah, Jane, silence is best for that."

" I *won't* keep silence," replied the little girl stoutly. " I owe you too much. Have you forgotten how, years ago, you rescued me from a crowd of little ruffians who were jeering at me on my way from school?"

Max nodded but smiled deprecatingly.

" Have you forgotten how kind and gentle you were when I lost your knife—the one you prized so much—that time at the picnic?"

Max laughed aloud. Certainly here was a reviving of history lost from every mind but that of the girl before him.

" And Max, have you forgotten the day you snatched me from under the very feet of a runaway horse—and saved my life? My life!" she repeated bitterly.

" A life of beauty, Jane," said the other gravely. " No matter—"

" Ah, Max, I have not forgotten. I was

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only eight and you fourteen, but I've loved you ever since—as a dear brother, Max, much better than my own brother, and I won't have you so cruelly misjudged as you have been this day."

She rose from her chair and Max placed a gently restraining hand upon her arm.

" Jane, if I beg you "—he began.

" I won't promise anything, I tell you," she interrupted. " So you needn't ask me. I know you love Doris and I know she loves you, and I won't see you both unhappy. So there!"

" You are mistaken, Jane," said Meyer. " Doris doesn't love me."

The girl laughed a shrill, staccato laugh in whose inflections scorn held the mastery.

" How wonderfully keen you men are, to be sure," she cried. " Of *course* you noted this evening that Doris was jealous of that woman and of *course* you know there can be no jealousy of that kind without love."

Then came a swift transition.

" God has laid his finger heavily on me,

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Max, but on my body only. He has left me with a woman's heart, strong to suffer and to endure—and to rejoice. Don't you think I know Doris loves you; that I feel she does—that I want her to—that the happiness of you both is as dear to me as my soul's salvation?"

Overcome with the tempest within her heart, the little girl sank again into her chair, breathing heavily, her cheeks aflame.

"Jane, my dear little friend!" He took her hand, but she snatched it away.

"Oh, Max," she went on—now in bantering mood—, "you don't know how to capture Doris. I *mean* 'capture.' She's the kind you have to take by force, as the primitive savage felled his beloved with a club and dragged her home by the hair of her head." Then, with sudden intensity, "I shall tell her everything and when you see her again—take her in your arms and don't take 'No' for an answer. Now I must go."

She arose and went to the window: "Ellen, Ellen," she cried.

Max had followed her.

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"I am going away to-morrow," he said stonily, "and I shall not see Doris again."

The girl turned and flashed a wondrous look into his eyes. "You—are going away—to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

Jane held out her hand with a quiet laugh. "Good-bye, Max. A pleasant journey. . . . Come, Ellen, I'm going," she added, as her companion entered the room.

"Not through the fields, Jane," protested Max. "The dew is heavy. I'll see you home."

"No!" commanded the young woman. "We shall go alone."

Max smiled. "At least," he said, "I can see you to our gate as I would any stranger?"

"Or any tramp!" laughed Jane. "Come, Ellen, he's going to see us off the premises so he won't have to lock up the spoons."

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XXII

ACOB STRAUSS, entering the library, just before the departure of the visitors from the Gray mansion, to find that Nathan Meyer had left it and that he was alone, went to the window and looked after Max and the women he was escorting. He shook his head thoughtfully, when he heard the high treble of little Jane say: "So you are going away to-morrow?"

What could that mean, he thought. What is the trouble with that little girl?

The old man walked slowly about the room, setting things to rights in his habit of orderliness. At last he dropped into a chair and picked up an old volume of sacred lore. He might have read himself to sleep after his not unusual fashion had not a hurried and heavy tread in the hall aroused his faculties. Quickly he arose and went to the door to confront one of the last men he cared to see—Paul Gray.

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The old man recoiled in surprise; then cried out sternly: " Well, what do you want here?"

" I want my sister!" returned the other gruffly. " She sneaked off over here and I've come to take her away from this place."

" Well, she's gone," said Strauss angrily, " and the sooner you follow the better."

Paul sneered disdainfully, peering about the room as if feminine shapes might be incarnated in dark corners there.

" Oh, you may be lying to me, Strauss," he growled. " How do I know?"

Jacob's wrath was now nearly ungovernable. A Gray was distasteful enough at any time, but that this cub, this worthless young Gentile, whom he knew to be what he was, should invade the sanctity of the home of Meyer, and insult him—Strauss—and, inferentially, all the place held, was unbearable.

He shook his lean talons in the flushed face of the young man and screamed: " How dare you speak to me so? You miserable little thief!"

With an inarticulate cry of rage, terror and

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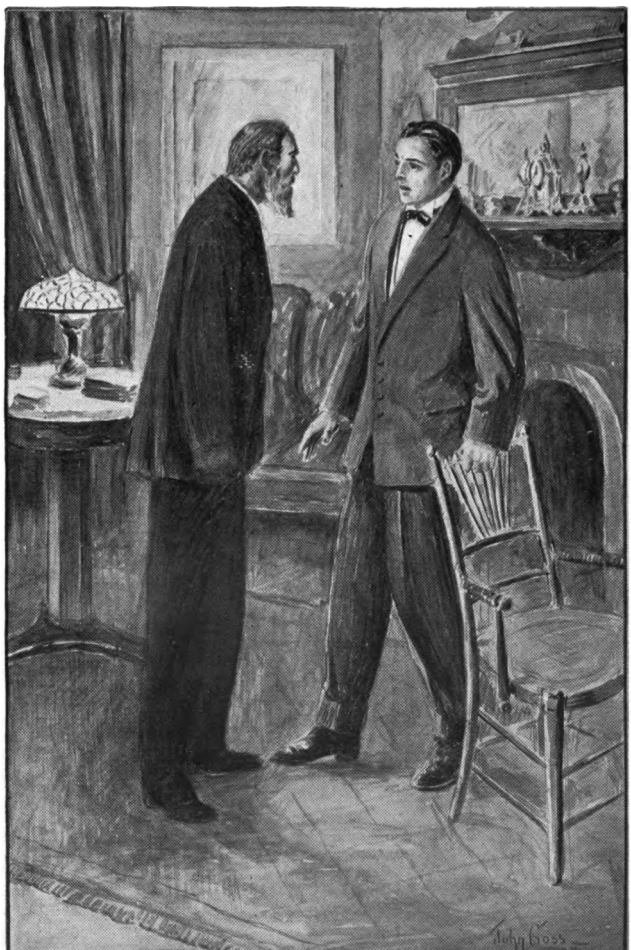

" You're a thief—a forger—a— "

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astonishment the boy sprang forward as if to tear the very life from the ancient retainer's body. He recovered himself on the perilous edge of violence.

"If you were not an old man," he said slowly, "I'd knock you down and kick your head in. . . . Now what do you mean by what you just said, you damned Jew?"

"*What* I said," shouted Strauss furiously. "You're a thief—a forger—a—"

"Good God," muttered Paul, recoiling from his accuser.

The old man followed him relentlessly, step by step. "Ask Moss Abrams what I mean," he yelled. "Ask your father, if he's called upon to pay that note of yours."

"Strauss, Strauss," pleaded the youth abjectly, "for Heaven's sake, hush."

But Jacob's fury had not yet spent itself. "Wait—you cringing cur," he snarled. "You insulted and drove from your house this evening the man who bought your notes; who is trying to save your family from disgrace; who is standing between you and a woman,

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who has come here to make you marry her."

The shot reserved for the last told heavily. The boy's ruddy cheeks took on the color of chalk and he dropped, cowering, into a chair.

"God, is *she* here?" he groaned.

"Yes, she's here—a common, scheming woman on whom you wasted stolen money. And you—a profligate, a thief, a forger, dare to scoff at the name of Jew."

As the rasping voice lingered a little on the closing word of its tirade, the door suddenly opened and Max Meyer entered.

"Mr. Strauss, what does this mean?" he asked coldly.

Jacob turned haughtily, his eyes flaming. "I've been telling this dog here what *he* is and what *you* are."

"You have interfered with my plans, sir," said Max in a tone that cut his father's old servant to the quick. This were worse, far worse, than being flouted by the Gentile cringing before him.

Tears, not wholly of sadness, came to his eyes as he laid a hand on the young man's arm.

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" Interfered?" he repeated stoutly. " Take that back, Max. For a quarter of a century I have served your father faithfully, and I have *earned* the right to defend the name of Meyer as if it were my own!"

Repentance filled the heart of the junior partner. " Forgive me, old friend," he cried earnestly, " you *have* earned the right to do as you please in this house."

The two clasped hands. The old retainer seemed greatly moved, yet he was not at all disposed to retreat from his position. As he moved towards the door he turned, with a rare expression of quizzical humor on his face.

" Max, I—well, I'm sorry. I mean—I'm sorry I didn't say more."

And with one parting look of contempt at the doleful heap in the chair, that was Paul Gray, he took his leave.

Max, too, regarded the terror-stricken young fellow with ill-disguised disgust. " I intended to have a talk with you, but not so soon," he said. " As matters are, however, we'll have it out now. Look up—stand up,"

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he added impatiently. "I want to speak with you face to face."

The boy hauled his bulk slowly out from the chair and at last got upon his feet. Shamefacedly he attempted to look Max in the eye, but failed. His furtive gaze wandered about the handsome room, touching every point save that of the face of the man he had so gratuitously insulted only a few hours before.

"Don't be hard upon me, Max," he pleaded.

"Hard upon you?" repeated Meyer. "Do you think you deserve leniency? You've disgraced your college, sir, and you've forfeited your manhood. You have dishonored the name you bear and would have brought reproach upon your family. Hard upon you!"

He turned away with a gesture of repugnance which the boy mistook for an intent to leave him to his own devices. He followed Meyer hesitatingly and put a restraining hand upon his elbow.

"I—I didn't know, of course," he almost blubbered, "that you were trying to help me, or—"

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The other shook off the hand as he would have shaken off some repulsive insect.

"Oh, leave me out of it," he cried harshly. "What I've done was not for your sake."

"I know it was for Doris," said Paul humbly, "but I want to thank you—"

Meyer turned on the boy like a thunder cloud.

"Stop!" he shouted. "Don't *thank* me. I can't stand that from you—not now. If you ever show yourself a man, then thank me, or rather thank your sisters. . . Now pay attention to what I say. . . I bought your note of Moss Abrams and I'll see that this matter does not get to your father. You can pay me back as you are able. You understand?"

A wave of relief swept over the boy's florid face, and his blue eyes beamed.

"Max, how can I thank—"

"*Do you understand?*" repeated Meyer with increased severity.

"Yes," was the reply, "and I will pay you back."

"Very well. . . Now, then, Polly Bigelow

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is to call to see me to-morrow. I shall try to get your letters from her and end that episode and I shall give you the letters that you yourself may destroy them. This will make you a free man, so far as your actions are concerned. But remember this—your conscience will hold you in chains until you redeem yourself."

"I know it, Max," returned the boy, utterly crushed into acquiescence with any denunciation of himself or any plan for his regeneration. "I know it, and I'll redeem myself."

"Do it," said Max earnestly. "For old Columbia's sake,—for your sisters' sake. To-morrow Polly Bigelow shall come and go. Then come to me and I will give you the letters. That is all."

Silently but significantly the junior partner led the way to the door, Paul Gray following as a matter of course.

At the threshold, the boy turned and said brokenly: "Max, will you let me shake your hand?"

For an instant Max Meyer was on the point

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of yielding, but he was very human and the fever had not yet abated in the wounds given him by the house of Gray.

"Not yet, Paul," he replied. "When you've earned the right to offer me your hand —I'll gladly take it."

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XXIII

IRE was the consternation at the offices of Meyer & Son next morning —Jacob Strauss was half an hour late.

Had the sun failed to appear at his appointed hour, had the crisp, red leaves of autumn suddenly become the tender green of spring, the clerks of Meyer & Son might, perhaps, have experienced a trifle more surprise.

As it was, they waited in the street for the old man to appear with the key of the outside door, animatedly discussing the chances of his sudden death.

Strauss himself, when he appeared, gave no sign of perturbation, nor offered any apology to the waiting Gentiles.

Then surprise followed on surprise's heels. Not long after the opening the junior partner himself walked briskly in, in full view of the clerks; went into the private office; rolled

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back the top of his desk with an impetuosity entirely foreign to his usual habits and sat down at once and busied himself with some typewritten sheets of paper.

This latter proceeding was noted by young Armstrong, who peered over the junior partner's shoulder, as he entered the room upon a very evidently trumped-up errand.

Then, as if the contagion were general, all the clerks dashed furiously at their work and scarcely raised a head when, not long afterward, the fair Clarissa McBride sailed in with a great flouncing of skirts and shaking of hat.

She, too, was animated with the morning briskness and sought out Jacob without delay.

"Mr. Strauss," she asked jauntily, "do you allow calls on the junior partner during business hours?"

"The junior partner is a law unto himself," growled the old man as he led the reporter into the private office.

"Glad to see you, Mrs. McBride," cried Max, jumping from his desk and bowing the lady to a chair. "Take this seat."

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Clarissa looked about her with evident interest and more especially at the beautiful and sadly unused piece of mahogany that belonged to the junior partner.

" Is this your desk?" she asked quizzically.

" Yes."

Clarissa cast a swift look of amusement from this immaculate bit of furniture to the heaped-up desk of the father, and almost laughed aloud.

" My, how orderly you are!" she cried. " Not a paper to be seen and not a drop of ink. Oh, Max, Max, what a busy man you are. . . . Mr. Strauss, don't let him work himself to death, will you?"

" I'll try not to," replied the old servitor.

" Such a lot of books and papers," continued Clarissa. " I suppose you know what is in them all."

Old Jacob smiled sarcastically.

" To the last cross of a ' t ' and the dot of an ' i,' " he declared, as he left the room.

" And now may I ask?"—began Max with a smile—

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" Why I'm here?"

The junior partner nodded. " Well, yes," he said, " although I wouldn't put it quite so abruptly as that."

" Well, I'll tell you," said Clarissa in a confidential tone. " I got a 'phone from Mr. Mulvey last night "—here her florid cheeks took on a slight addition of color very modestly—" as I say, I got a 'phone from Mr. Mulvey that your father wanted us to meet him here, but as neither of them is here I—"

" You deign to give me a few minutes of your society."

The lady nodded assent emphatically.

" I, too, had an appointment for this morning," said Meyer. " Two in fact,"—looking at his watch,—" but every one seems to be tardy to-day, even Mr. Strauss, who was late this morning for the first time within the memory of the oldest inhabitant."

Clarissa raised her hands with mock horror.

" Jacob Strauss failed to be here at the stroke of the clock? Impossible. I must make a story of that for *The Banner*."

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Just then the sharp peal of the telephone bell interrupted the tete-a-tete and Max put the receiver to his ear.

" Very well. . . . I'll wait," he said to the unknown, then to Clarissa, " One of my tardy, expected visitors."

Clarissa smiled. She felt positive that she knew the sort of voice that had travelled over the wire. She could have told him, too, why Polly Bigelow was late, but she bridled her tongue, no small doing in itself and one that threatened disastrous consequences at any moment.

But if she was in peril of not being able to hold to her promise to say nothing that would give a hint of the lively hour's work she and the Honorable Peter Mulvey had performed that morning after a ten-minute interview with Nathan Meyer in the parlor of the Hotel Jarvis, she was saved from any possible consequences of garrulousness by the entrance of Mr. Mulvey himself.

The politician was puffing like a grampus and mopping his round face with a gaudily

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colored handkerchief, although summer had long passed and the tingle of October was in the dry atmosphere. However, the Honorable Peter reserved to himself the right to perspire in any and all months of the year, and nobody in town noted his peculiarities any longer.

The Honorable Peter paid his hearty and jovial respects to the junior partner; then beckoned to Mrs. McBride and they left the private office together. But instead of passing through the general room, as Clarissa had expected, the Honorable Peter, with a softly whispered word of explanation, turned her to the right and they entered the door leading into the great directors' room used by officials of enterprises in which the house of Meyer was interested.

"This way, if you don't mind, Mrs. McBride," Mulvey had said. "I've landed my fish and Nathan Meyer's got him in tow and probably coming up the front steps this blessed minute, and we'd better not meet him."

The Honorable Peter chuckled as he looked

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around the rich and spacious room, with its great table and huge leather stuffed chairs. Then he pointed a fat finger towards the ceiling and Clarissa, following the gesture, noted with her keen journalistic instinct that the heavy front glass sashes of the partition had been let down on their chains.

"They've got the acoustics fixed all right," said her companion, with a grin. "Better than the telephone." And he grinned as if he had emitted an extraordinary witticism.

Mrs. McBride awaited the explanation that she felt should accompany the joke and was rather vexed when none was forthcoming.

Mr. Mulvey proved a good prophet, for he and Mrs. McBride had but reached the back street when Nathan Meyer stepped from a cab and was followed by Major Gray. A moment later the two men entered Jacob Strauss' own particular den in the rear of the banking offices.

The major was in an extremely bewildered condition, and he showed it as he took a seat and gazed about him nervously.

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" Meyer, what does this secrecy mean?" he asked.

" I wish you to act as judge between your son and mine," was the firm response.

" To judge between your son and mine?" echoed the major, now completely muddled. " Explain yourself."

" I will," said the banker, " but I must be brief. . . In order to spare your daughter pain *my* son has taken upon himself the sins of yours."

" Meyer!" cried the major, his lips working convulsively and his hands gripping each other.

" It is so," said Nathan Meyer. "I will spare you pain also—but not at the sacrifice of my son's good name. The law of my people teaches justice—exact justice—between men. My son would set aside this law; but I, his father, insist upon it, and without his knowledge I have summoned you, Major Gray, to sit in judgment on these two young men."

"My son?" cried the major in evident distress, "What has he done?"

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The banker arose from his chair and faced the old soldier calmly.

"You shall learn, if you will—if you have the courage. . . Come, sir, decide, or it may be too late. Your son against mine."

The major rose from his seat, brought up his head proudly and squared his shoulders.

"I accept the challenge, sir."

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XXIV

AS the Honorable Peter Mulvey and Mrs. Clarissa McBride emerged into Main Street after a detour around the block, a strategic move carefully planned by the politician, they came very near to collision with George Clarke, who was hurrying along towards the offices of Meyer & Son, with a stern, set face and looking neither to the right nor to the left.

Apparently the lawyer did not perceive them, for he bolted by without a word or a glance. Mr. Mulvey stopped short, or as short as was possible, considering the momentum of his large bulk, and turned to look after the speeding man of law.

"Didn't see us," he said with a chuckle. "Must be in a devil of a hurry." He pondered a moment; then gave vent to his peculiar species of whistling. "That'll be a pretty mix-up," he added to himself.

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It seemed necessary to the politician to know exactly where the young lawyer was going, and there being a curve in the street he ambled out to the middle of the roadway to keep Clarke's figure in sight as long as possible; all this much to the astonishment of fair Clarissa, who by this time had begun to feel that her powers of attraction were well-nigh spurned.

But the Honorable Peter was back in a moment.

" He's gone into the Meyer office as plump as a repeater's vote into a ballot box. I thought Max was to see him last night."

The two then proceeded on their way, with Peter's substantial head very close to Clarissa's as he explained the extraordinary complications that were likely to arise from the presence of the young lawyer in the Meyer establishment at this particular moment.

Much mollified, Mrs. McBride listened intently to all this on their walk of several minutes to the Hotel Jarvis. It was partly the gratification of womanly curiosity that made

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the trip so pleasant; partly the journalistic instinct that told the lady what wonders she was storing up for future " exclusives " and partly—to say it plainly—the heart interest of a woman in a man who was somewhat of a figure in the world and not at all ill-favored.

Having arrived at the hotel, Clarissa trotted up stairs and speedily trotted down again, bringing under her wing a young woman, small of figure and daintily blonde in beauty. Evidently the young lady was an object of deep interest both to Peter and Clarissa, as their whispered parley concerning her gave evidence.

The Honorable Peter insisted that it was not wise that their charge be left alone. Mrs. McBride insisted with no less energy and with a certain touch of womanly feeling in the matter, that it would not be wise for him to go with her.

The delicate question was finally settled by Clarissa herself, as it was foreordained it would be. She plumped into the cab which Mulvey had hailed for the purpose, pulled the

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young woman energetically after her, snapped the door and through the window in front gave instructions to the driver as to their destination.

Peter rubbed his large chin meditatively as he watched them drive slowly away. Having made certain that the beginning of the trip, at least, was under way, he wagged his head thoughtfully and turned into the hotel office, muttering as he went:

"After all our planning, I hope George Clarke's visit won't put the kibosh on the whole thing."

The visit of the young lawyer, however unlooked for and unwelcomed by the plotting politician, was apparently not unexpected by the house of Meyer & Son, for the junior partner had given orders that when he came he should be admitted at once to the private office.

However, it was the head of the house himself whom Clarke first met as Nathan chanced to pass through the outer offices.

"Good morning, Clarke."

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"Good morning, Meyer. Is your son here?"

Nathan looked at him with interrogation.

"Yes. . . . You've come to return that letter?"

"No," replied the lawyer almost in a whisper. "That letter is the lever with which we are going to pry loose the franchise from Gray. I shall not return it unless your son consents to this."

"Ah!" said the banker to himself. "I hadn't intended this." Then he led the way to the private office and opened the door.

"Max, here's Clarke. Will you see him here —or elsewhere?"

"Here—now," said the junior partner, rising briskly. He knew there was a challenge in the visit, pre-arranged though it had been. He knew that it was a fight to the finish with no favors given or taken. He knew that this man stood between him and the greatest joy the world could afford. Yet he permitted nothing in his bearing to indicate the slightest hostility—as yet.

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" Very well," said the father. Then, as he closed the door upon Clarke and his son he murmured fervently: " It's the decree of God."

For a moment or two the two men in the private office sat regarding each other coldly and yet with that intensity of interest that might have marked the approach of a pair of gladiators in the great days of Rome.

The lawyer, true to the instincts of his profession, was the first to speak.

" I couldn't see you last night," he began politely. " Shall we continue our argument of yesterday afternoon, or will you listen to a proposition I have to make?"

" State it, please," was Max's equally unemotional reply.

" You have the note," resumed the lawyer, " to which Paul Gray forged his father's name. You did not pay Moss Abrams $500 for that piece of paper just for a keepsake, I imagine. Tell me what you were going to do with the note, and I'll tell you what I'm going to do with the Abrams letter."

" Let us be seated," said Max quietly.

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"This may take time. . . . I'll tell you what I'm going to do with the note. I am going to keep it from the knowledge of the boy's father."

"Oh, really?" replied Clarke with a disagreeable laugh. "Well, I'm going to use the letter to pull the major off his perch and get that franchise. It means promotion for me, and it's promotion I'm after."

"Clarke!" said Max, looking straight into the rather shifty eyes of the young lawyer, and speaking very earnestly the while, "a man makes a poor bargain who exchanges his sense of personal honor for place or preferment."

Clarke laughed again, a mirthless, sarcastic laugh.

"Oh, hell," he said. "If Gray had the deadwood on us, do you think he'd hesitate?"

"Yes, he would hesitate," returned Max stoutly, "if it would eternally disgrace a foolish boy and bring shame on all who love him. Why, you are hesitating, Clarke, yourself."

But Clarke's face was certainly no pictorial evidence of that desirable frame of mind.

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Its expression was cool, calculating, cynical.

" I see through you, Meyer," said the lawyer with a sneer. " The major doesn't figure in your calculations a little bit. It's the girl! You hope to curry favor with her by saving her brother."

A wave of faint color spread over Max's olive cheek. It would have been easy to end the lawyer's insolence then and there, but the cost would have been too great. Diplomacy was the game; he must abide by it.

" She shall never know of this—if I can help it," he said slowly.

Then, as if to accentuate his former deliberation, he pulled his pocket book from his coat with a swift movement and as swiftly drew a bit of paper therefrom.

This he thrust into the other's face.

" Clarke, here's the note," he cried. " If I destroy this, will you destroy that letter?"

The lawyer slowly shook his head with a faint smile of amusement, opening his cigarette case, and taking out one of the little white tubes with a fine air of careful selection.

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" Do you love Doris Gray?" demanded Max.

" Well—yes," replied Clarke calmly.

" I would give my life to spare her pain—would you?"

The attorney paused as if weighing some extraordinary proposition from opposing counsel.

" No, I do not love her like that," he said, rolling his cigarette gently in the palm of his hand. He struck a match and raised it to the bit of paper and tobacco.

" But you love her enough to spare her pain, do you not? . . . Here, let me have that."

At the word he snatched the match from the hand of the astonished Clarke and touched its tiny flame to a corner of the note. A moment more and the paper was floating to the floor in charred and delicate fragments and the prime evidence of a boy's folly had vanished into air.

" Now, Clarke," said Max firmly, " you can remove the last suggestion of her brother's guilt. . . . Will you do it?"

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The lawyer sprang to his feet, his face lighted by all the better elements of his nature.

"By the Lord, Max Meyer," he shouted, "I have misjudged you. You are worthy of her!"

An instant more and the Moss Abrams letter was in his hands torn this way and that into scores of little pieces. These he dropped into a waste-basket at his feet.

"Meyer," he said half bitterly as he took his hat from the junior partner's desk, "I have destroyed my chance for immediate preferment. Pass it to my credit, please. . . . Good morning."

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XXV

PEACH " murmured Julian Armstrong fervently, suddenly noting the presence in the inner office, just as Clarke had passed out on his way to the street, of a very small and very pretty young woman clad in a dark red suit and topped by a toque of the same color.

His admiration, not to say perturbation, was still further increased when he found, in answer to the pressure of a button from Max Meyer's desk, that he was to escort this charming apparition into the private office. He did so with the utmost show of gallantry and was known to boast long afterward that had he had a few moments more in point of time, there would have been " something doing " in that particular line.

Just at present, however, Miss Polly Bigelow was not concerning her dainty head about understrappers in the house of Meyer & Son.

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She had come to keep her appointment with the junior partner, feeling morally, if not immorally, certain that she would depart therefrom a winner to an extent she dared not name to herself.

She took Max's hand with great cordiality and sat herself down, calmly awaiting the issue.

"Thank you for coming, Polly," Meyer began. "I was rather short with you yesterday and I want to beg your pardon."

"Oh, that's all right, Max," said the girl demurely. "Forget it. I'm not worrying. I sized you up at college. You were always straight."

Max smiled slightly at this unsolicited testimonial, but proceeded directly to the point.

"Now, Polly," he said earnestly, "let us come to business. You have the letters with you?"

The young lady tapped her shirtwaist smartly with a little laugh.

"Yes, and in the same old place. And they are not coming out, either, until Paul

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makes good his promise to marry me. I've made up my mind to that!"

"You haven't made up your mind to that, Polly," retorted Max, with much decision. "Let me tell you why. You're too sensible in the first place, and too kind in the second."

Polly gave an airy laugh and shook her head gleefully.

"Oh, is that so?" she cried.

"Yes. Paul is nothing but a boy—a weak, foolish boy. He has run himself into debt on your account, and he can expect no aid from his father—if he learns of this entanglement. You can make a great deal of trouble for Paul—I grant that—and you can bring grief to his family; but you cannot *make* him marry you, and as he hasn't a penny, what benefit would you derive from a breach of promise suit?"

The girl pouted and her bright face took on a sullen look.

"Well, maybe I can't *make* him marry me, and I shan't lose my mind if he doesn't; but I guess they'd pass the hat around the family before they'd have me bring him into court."

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" Polly," Max went on, with as much reproach as he dared to put into his voice, " when I was at college we fellows used to think you the nicest girl at Madame Delaine's —quiet, gentle and modest. And now I find you a hard, grasping woman! You don't love Paul; he doesn't love you. He wrote those letters in moments of folly, as many a chap has done before, and here are you— Polly Bigelow—the little *lady* I used to know —trying to make capital out of a poor boy's passing infatuation. . . . Polly, I'm ashamed of you!"

After this beautiful sermon, certainly delivered in a most effective way, the young preacher leaned back and viewed his pretty little visitor with a kindly smile.

She had lost something of her buoyancy and she stirred uneasily in her chair, avoiding Max's eye. Still she could talk.

" Oh, pshaw," said she.

" Now, Polly," asked Max more earnestly than ever, " what has changed you so?"

The young woman laughed defiantly.

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"Oh, cut it out, Max. Lots of girls are making monkeys of rich men's sons these days and I thought I'd take a hand in the game. I don't care for Paul Gray—he's a wishy-washy sort of beast anyway, but I thought I might work him or his family for enough to start a manicure parlor of my own. I want to set up for myself."

"So," replied Max soothingly, in a manner he might have adopted towards a rather refractory but good-hearted child, "I don't blame you. It's a laudable ambition."

At this point, quite by accident, of course, the junior partner removed from its pigeon-hole a very impressive-looking checkbook with the name "Meyer & Son" in fat gilt letters stamped on its cover. This he toyed with absent-mindedly for a moment; then turned to the girl and asked:

"How much would it cost?"

Polly pursed her crimson lips and stared at the ceiling for a few seconds.

"Well," she enumerated, "there's the rent and fittings and tools and a couple of

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assistants. Two thou. would start me—and I'd keep a-going all right."

Max lifted the cover of the checkbook perhaps higher than was absolutely necessary and allowed the effect of the fat gilt letters to be thoroughly appreciated. "Polly, I'm going to make you an offer."

"Let 'er go," said the girl, with a suspicion of aroused enthusiasm.

"If you will give me Paul's letters," went on the junior partner slowly, "now—and promise never to see him again, I'll be responsible for the rent and the fittings and everything, and you can pay me back whenever it suits your convenience."

The small figure sat up straight at this and a little gasp of joy came from it.

"You mean that?"

"You have my word for it—and my father's."

Polly's lips trembled ever so slightly and a deeper color came into her cheeks.

"I aint used to your kind, Max," she declared, "but I know the real thing when I see

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it, and your word goes with me. And—and, Max, I don't want you to think I'm such a bad sort. All the men I meet either want to jolly me or make a fool of me, and it—it kind of hardens a girl."

Max Meyer arose and again took the young woman by the arm.

"I know, Polly. I understand," he said.

Polly understood too.

"Of course I know you aint doing this just for me," she observed. "It's for that girl—his sister—but it's good of you any way you look at it."

"Then it's a bargain?" asked Meyer gently.

"Turn around," she said. "Back to. . . . There. Now you may turn again," and Max Meyer, obeying instructions with considerable amusement, found that the young lady now had a sizable packet of letters in her hand. This packet she placed on the desk in front of her. Then she turned to Max with a new sort of look in her eyes.

"I won't sell these letters to you," she cried.

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" I give them to you. You can help me or not as you choose. But just think kindly of a poor girl who has to make her way the best she can."

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XXVI

MAX MEYER carefully stacked the letters into a little, perfumed pile, smiling with satisfaction as he did so. Then he turned suddenly to find his pretty visitor using her handkerchief upon a region very near her eyes.

"I thank you, Polly," he said, "and I'll keep my promise. . . . I have your address here on these letters?"

The girl peeped at him over her bit of lace and cambric and nodded vigorously.

"Well, then," continued Max, putting the packet into his pocket, "you'll hear from me soon. You have gained my respect and sympathy, Polly. . . . Good luck go with you," he added kindly as he opened the door.

She took his hand in both hers and pressed it impulsively to her breast for a moment. Then, as if ashamed of her emotion, she tossed her head with something of her old

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defiant spirit and turned to the open door to go forever.

She stopped short, her face flushing violently, for there, standing just outside the threshold, were the sisters of Paul Gray, the girls she had seen dimly the evening before.

They had undoubtedly been witnesses to Miss Polly's demonstrative action and that young lady was not pleased thereat. She threw up her chin with a loud laugh.

" Mercy me, she's right on the dot every time, isn't she? "

Max turned at the words and saw Doris Gray, her face white and her lips set, just as he had beheld her on the previous night.

As he looked at her she drew haughtily back and would have gone away at once had not little Jane held her firmly by the arm, whispering passionately: " Wait, wait! "

" Again this woman," murmured Doris, instinctively shrinking as the red-coated figure confronted her with a bright smile, glancing quizzically from one to the other of the actors in this little drama.

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" You want to brush a little dust out of your eyes, Miss Gray," she laughed, " and then maybe you can see through a wall with a double door in it."

Then, with a swiftly flashed look of gratitude, of respect and of admiration mingled, she added: " Max, you're a brick, and she doesn't know it. Good-bye to all of you. It's me for Broadway."

She passed Doris with a sweeping courtesy and nodded good-naturedly to Jane.

" Wait; let me speak to you, please," said the little creature, and they went out together.

The elder sister hesitated on the threshold, proud and silent, the owner of a bitter heart.

" *Again* this woman," she thought once more. Then she realized, with a sudden sense of embarrassment, that there must be some explanation of her own presence.

" Jane brought me here," she began slowly as in answer to an unspoken question, " but not to witness this, I presume. She said you were going away to-day, and I thought—she thought—."

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The words died away completely.

"That we ought to say good-bye," suggested Max gravely. "Yes, that is right. We've been friends for so many years. . . . Won't you come in, Doris?"

For an instant the girl had an impulse to rush wildly from the place, then a sense of justice told her that it was but fair to hear what this comrade of her childhood had to say for himself. She entered the room and sat down in one of the great leather chairs.

"Jane," she began coldly, "thinks that you are trying to shield my brother from harm. . . . What harm could come to him from that woman?"

"No harm is coming to him, Doris," was the quiet reply. "Jane was mistaken."

The girl's lips curled with scorn.

"I thought so," she said decisively. "This woman—whom *you* know so well—could have nothing to do with Paul. . . I hope you will pardon my intrusion."

She rose and turned toward the door with the most frigid of bows as well as the smallest.

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Max sprang before the threshold to intercept her.

" Doris," he cried, " don't go with unjust thoughts of me. We have grown up together. Have you known me to tell a lie? "

" No," was the cold admission.

" Then won't you believe me now when I say that I have simply business relations with Miss—with the woman who has just left us? "

The girl laughed mirthlessly.

" You ask too much—really," she returned. " She calls you ' Max ' and embraces you in public, and you—' business relations,' indeed! It is humorous."

She tapped her foot nervously on the carpet and seemed on the point of breaking into hysterical laughter. Max, too, for the first time, appeared to have lost something of his habitual composure.

" I grant it seems strange," he said, " but I—I knew her when I was at college and—"

" That explains everything—of course," the girl broke in bitterly.

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" Doris, I would take your word unhesitatingly above the seeming evidence of my eyes or the united accusation of the world. That is because I believe in you and because I love you. You do not love me, but you should believe in me, for what have I ever done for one moment to forfeit that belief? "

It was the cry of a strong man for faith, if not for love. It came with all its sincerity upon the soul of an injured woman and found it weak.

Suddenly Doris Gray turned her great blue eyes upon Max Meyer and there was swimming in their depths something that made his blood leap from his heart with a new intensity.

" But if I should say that I do love you," the girl murmured.

" Doris ! "

The poet in his heart sang for very joy and yet he was calm withal. He took her hand and would have raised it to his lips but that she gently held it back.

" If," she went on, " if what I said were true, wouldn't you tell me all, Max? "

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"In that case, Mr. Meyer," she said, "it is good-bye"

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The man shook his head sadly.

" I cannot tell you that, Doris," he said, and the girl knew there was no compromising with his decision, even though the god of love himself were the ambassador.

She withdrew her hand petulantly from his. " There should be no secrets between those who love," she cried with pouting lips, " and if you do love me—as you say—you would bare your soul to me."

" I can say nothing more, Doris," he answered firmly, though he knew to what he was sentencing himself.

The young woman's eyes blazed as she turned on her heel.

" In that case, Mr. Meyer," she said, " it is good-bye."

Then he was alone.

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XXVII

OR ONE brief moment of blank dismay, of dull and hopeless heartache, Max Meyer hesitated; then stepped briskly to the door of his private office and threw it open.

The click of the check on the street door caught his ear and through the glass panels he saw the woman he loved proudly descending the steps. Involuntarily, he paused and gazed after her. Down the street she went, looking neither to the right nor the left, straight, superb, her very walk seeming to him an impersonation of contempt.

Only for an instant, however, had he time for the bitterness of introspection, for even as he looked at the retreating figure of Doris Gray, the girl's father, followed by his own, stepped from a door at the right of the private office.

The old soldier's face was white and drawn;

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the banker's, radiant with triumph and joy. Their countenances were the antithesis of human emotion; the one bearing the marks of a mighty struggle and a signal defeat; the other that of the victorious commander who sees his legions standing over the prostrate foe.

Struck with a sudden realization of what the presence of the major meant, Max turned suddenly upon the old man.

"Major Gray, how long have you been here?" he asked slowly and deliberately.

"Since George Clarke arrived," replied the major with a world of significance in his tone.

The junior partner looked angrily from one to the other.

"Father, did you—did you plan this?" he asked.

The banker smiled.

"Not that he should hear the interview with Clarke," he replied, "but with the woman—yes. Your name is mine and it was at stake. I exercised my right to have

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it vindicated. . . . Has it been vindicated, Major Gray?"

The major's voice was broken and hollow, and his drawn lips quivered as he replied:

"Yes—but at such cost. . . . Doris—"

"Major, I beg of you," exclaimed Max, laying a hand of restraint upon the soldier's arm.

The older man shook it off but without anger.

"I know what you would ask," he said, "but your generosity is too great. . . . Doris—"

"Major," cried the young man, fear giving speed to his words, "Major, if you feel you are my debtor in the least degree, I beg of you to keep *my* secret."

Gray looked at him strangely for a moment and then took his hand and wrung it warmly.

"From you, Max, that is a command. . . . Meyer," he added, turning to the banker, "this young man is worthy of any woman's love, and I would be proud to have him for a son."

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The banker's face shone. He marched up to the major, holding before him the right hand of fellowship.

" Major," he said, " if you can forgive me for what I've done—let us be friends."

" You have opened my eyes, sir," was the reply, " and for that I thank you."

One moment he waited, then grasped the banker's hand. Enmity was at an end.

It ended so abruptly that old Jacob Strauss, entering to explain the cause of an unusual vocal disturbance in the outer office, saw it and marvelled—and grieved. Yet he held back what he had made up his mind to say.

" I told her you were engaged," he substituted, pointing to the general room, " but—" and he held up his hands in surrender to the force of womankind.

In verification of Strauss' defeat, in bustled Clarissa McBride, closely followed by Peter Mulvey, whose plastic countenance was decorated with a more than usually broad grin.

" She *would* come, you see, and when a woman says she will, why—" he remarked

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sagely, deeming the completion of his sentence unnecessary.

Clarissa began to speak, very much out of breath and very much excited, as the red glow on her cheeks and the shining light in her eyes testified.

"I just *had* to come. That's all there was to it," she declared. "You must know it, Mr. Meyer, and know it at once."

She stopped of a sudden and pointed dramatically to the junior partner.

"There he is," she cried. "'Morris Maxfield,' the famous author."

"Yes," chimed in the Honorable Peter, "and he's got banking beaten both ways."

Nathan Meyer's keen eyes sought the woman's face. Jacob Strauss raised his thin hands to heaven, while the object of this outburst shrugged his shoulders and smiled quietly.

Clarissa still remained mistress of the occasion.

"We just received advance sheets of the 'Universal Magazine' at *The Banner* office

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and they contain parts of 'The End of the Road,'—the very story I read the other day, the one you let me take, Mr. Strauss."

"That scribbling?" shouted Jacob.

"They paid him a thousand dollars for it," put in Mulvey, rolling the sum on his tongue as if it were a sweet morsel.

Jacob dropped into a chair. "What?" was all he could say and that but feebly.

The junior partner of Meyer & Son might have written all his days; might have become bright among the shining lights of the firmament, and yet the ancient servitor would have reckoned it of little account. But a thousand dollars for a short story! God of Abraham, *that* was success indeed!

"And I offered him *ten dollars*," continued Clarissa, raising penitent eyes to Nathan's searching gaze. "Mr. Meyer, I congratulate you. We are all proud of Max. He is famous. He has made his birthplace famous, and to-morrow *The Banner* will be famous, for it will claim it discovered it—and I dare any one to deny it."

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This with a militant glance at the Honorable Peter, who squirmed a little and shifted a certain dark round pellet from one cheek to the other.

"You needn't look at me, Clarissa," he said. "I'll not deny it or anything else you say, either."

He grinned again and a general smile went round.

"After that," ventured Nathan, "I do not need, even if I dared, to ask if this is all true."

His son nodded. "She has found me out, but I didn't want it known until—until—"

The banker gave him a resounding slap on the shoulder.

"My boy," he cried, "this is success, indeed. . . . Jake, we are all famous. Understand?"

"I'm trying to," replied the old man weakly.

"And," roared Peter Mulvey with joyous insistence, "I'm famous too. I'm engaged to the smartest woman in three States and

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I don't give a damn if we never get that franchise."

At this the major took his turn at back-slapping. His dignity suddenly unbending, he hit the politician such a vigorous crack that the huge bulk quivered.

"You'll get it, Mulvey," he declared heartily, "for I'm going to support Meyer & Son."

So saying, this old soldier extended his hand to Jacob Strauss. That ancient portion of the house, however, had not yet capitulated and he turned away without accepting the olive branch.

The major laughed tolerantly, bade the others good day, and marched away as if with honors of war.

"Yes, begorra, we're all famous," resumed Peter, making a sudden raid upon the face of the fair Clarissa as if to bestow upon her a chaste salute in honor of the announcement of their engagement, and getting both ears smartly boxed for his pains.

As the others passed out, leaving Meyer

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and his old clerk together, the banker slowly drew from his pocket a long, heavy envelope and slowly tore it across many times.

The silent Strauss watched him in dismay. Then he himself was left alone.

After a moment of silent musing, he walked slowly to the desk of the junior partner, looked at it blankly, then at the letters on the window: "Meyer & Son." Once more their golden tracery fell upon the carpet at his feet, but as he repeated the words over and over there was none of the triumphant tone of other days, nor yet the hopelessness of a later time, but merely dull amazement.

Slowly he closed the desk and turned away, wagging his long beard.

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XXVIII

AS THE junior partner stepped into the street, he seemed to see the sun as through a red mist. His brain was in a whirl and the world, to him, was topsy-turvy.

He had arrived at that precise point where a man wonders if he can ever smile again; if ever there shall be forgetfulness of a great sorrow.

She had bidden him good-bye, the good-bye worse than that of death—the good-bye over the grave of new-dead hopes. There had been in her words the accent of unchanging finality. Nothing he could do now, he told himself, would soften her heart. He could not himself explain the circumstances that had condemned him and, whether foolishly or not, he had pledged others not to do so.

He cursed himself as a dreamer, as a new

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and senseless sort of Don Quixote. He even apostrophized himself as an idiot who had bound himself in the chains of a mere mistaken sense of duty to another.

He saw nothing, heard nothing, but plunged along the street, head down, hands thrust into his pockets, dodging passers-by through mere instinct.

Thus it was that he failed to note the approach of a stalwart young man and a tall and graceful girl nearing him rapidly from the opposite direction. The youth held the young woman by the arm and was talking to her earnestly.

The three collided.

"Here he is now, Doris," cried the boy jubilantly.

The girl raised her blue eyes to Max, and the universe broadened and brightened about him.

"Max," cried the young fellow, "I've told Doris that I've been a cad and a scoundrel."

Meyer raised his hand in vain gesture.

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" Doris," Paul rushed on, " Max, here, as I have told you, has befriended me throughout, although I did not know it until to-day. . . . Max, I've just seen *her*. . . . Doris, I made a fool of myself with—a woman—the one you saw yesterday and Max has bought her off, and—he has befriended me in a still greater way. I can never repay him, but I shall try to redeem myself and become worthy of his friendship."

Max Meyer wrung the boy's hand; then thrust deeper into his coat pocket the package of letters it contained. His eyes sought Doris' face, but her beautiful lashes hung low.

Thus Russell Gray found the trio as he came stamping along the sidewalk, head in air like a war-horse scenting the fray.

The boy hurried towards him.

" Father!" he cried.

There was eloquence of pleading in the single word, but the major looked at him coldly and made as if to pass him by.

The intent was not lost upon the daughter.

" Max," she murmured tremulously, " you

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—you said you would be his friend."

The boy planted himself firmly across his father's path and looked at him frankly.

"Father," he said humbly, "try to forgive me—not now, but some day."

The old soldier's brow was still rigid in a frown. Evidently he was in no mood for the reception of a prodigal son, nor did the pleading face of his daughter soften his asperity.

Max Meyer took a hand in the attempt at reconciliation.

"Give him a chance," he begged earnestly, "for his sister's sake!"

The major hesitated; then grasped the hand of his son.

"For your *own* sake, my boy," he said brokenly.

With a muffled cry of gladness, the lad seized his father's arm and clung to it for a moment.

"I thank you," he said with a sudden choking of his voice. Then he turned and strode swiftly down the street.

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The major coughed somewhat artificially. A shrewd glance at his companions told him his particular province was elsewhere.

"Ahem," he sputtered, "I believe I—why, bless my soul, I have an engagement with Mulvey at noon. And I've got to tear him away from the McBride, too. Must go at once. Morning."

And with chest thrown out and chin in air he stalked away, beating a joyous tattoo with his stick.

So his daughter and the son of the man who had been his enemy were left together, beings of a newly created world.

"Max," whispered the girl, so low that none but an ear attuned to the softest melody of her voice could have caught the word.

"Yes."

"You—you remember what you said that—that night? Oh, Max, I—I *want* you."

"Doris!"

THE END

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